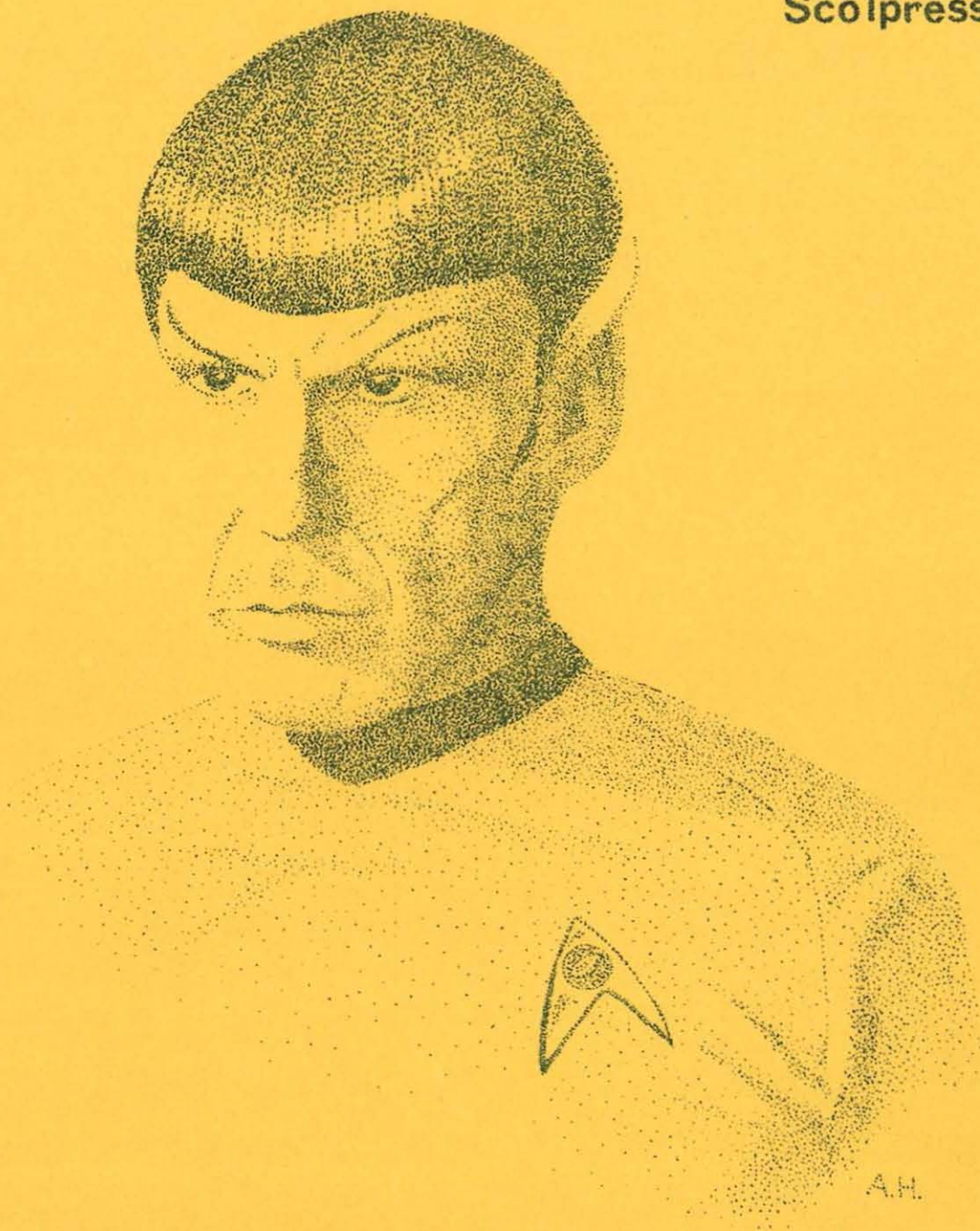


ScoTpress



**ENTERPRISE -**

**LOG      ENTRIES**

a STAR TREK  
fanzine

48

# - contents -

|                         |                              |      |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|------|
| A Problem of Navigation | by Vicki Richards            | P 3  |
| The Other Half I Need   | by Karen Hayden              | P 12 |
| Paradise Missed         | by <del>Janette</del> Burton | P 13 |
| To Trust Again          | by Beverly Knapp             | P 22 |
| No Beach to Walk        | by Sheryl Peterson           | P 44 |
| Confession              | by Ann Smith                 | P 44 |
| Hero                    | by Megi Wright               | P 45 |
| Naked Time              | by Valerie Piacentini        | P 48 |
| A Private Little Worry  | by Vicki Richards            | P 50 |
| Nursery Rhyme           | by The Wright Family         | P 51 |

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April 1982

Scotpress - Sheila Clark, Valerie Piacentini, Janet Quarton and Shona

Hello, and welcome to Enterprise - Log Entries 48.

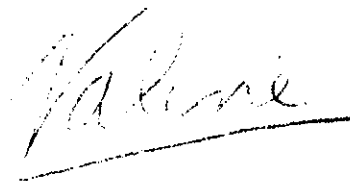
Work is well in hand for our special 50th issue, and all being well we should publish as we planned in August. Our writers and artists are doing marvellous work, and Sheila's Chain Gang are on a programme of strict training to prepare for a mammoth collating session.

Recently we've had some letters and discussions about scenes that were not actually included in Star Trek episodes, but which fans would have like to have seen. 'Naked Time' in this issue is an example - the result of Sheila's wish for a scene in which Spock and Kirk, both affected by the virus, have an opportunity to talk together without constraint.

If any of you would like to try your hand at such a scene, we'd be delighted to print an occasional series - we've often used stories which are episode continuations, but these scenes could come at any point in the episode.

April will be a busy month for us, with Shore Leave and U.F. P. Con. We are looking forward to them, and hope to see as many of you as possible in either Glasgow or Birmingham - or even both, for those of you rich enough to make it.

Thank you also for your letters and comments; we do find these a great help



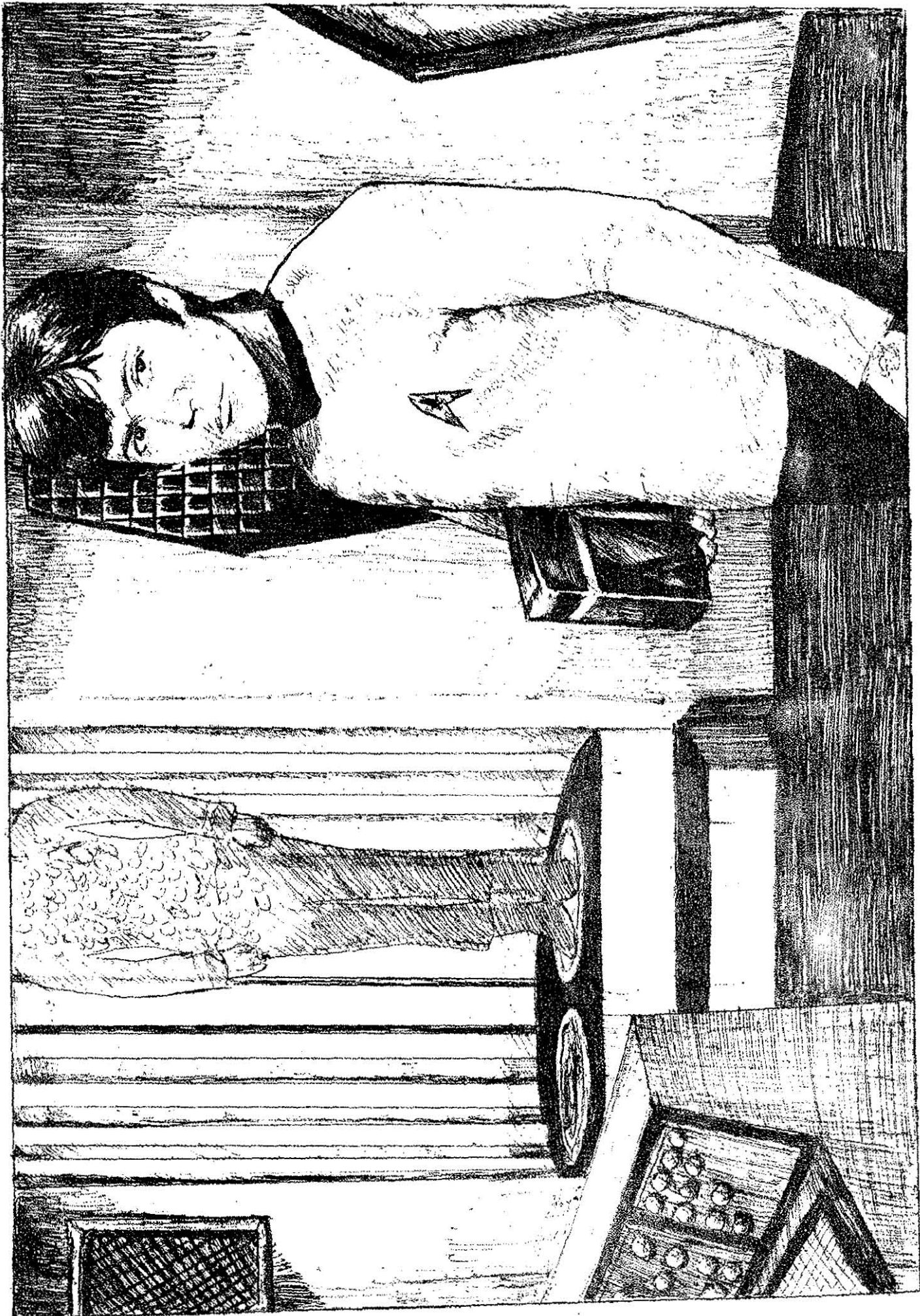
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P.S. - We wish to apologise for some words in this zine having a double image. This is where mistakes were corrected, and the typewriter seems to have been misaligning on these corrections.





### A PROBLEM OF NAVIGATION by Vicki Richards

Ensign Pavel Chekov stood rather nervously in the Transporter Area of Starbase 12. He had been waiting there for an hour, although he knew that the Starship wasn't due to rendezvous for another fifteen minutes. He had been waiting at the Starbase for several days now, having more trouble suppressing his eagerness and impatience with every passing minute. He seemed to have been waiting for years upon years for this moment, this day, which at times he had wondered if he would ever see.

Ever since he could remember he had wanted to be a Starship Navigator; to be the one who found the paths through the stars; to get out there, to see with his own eyes the myriad wonders of the galaxy; to be at last where he knew he belonged.

And now it seemed, miraculously almost, that the endless years of study and determination were about to pay off. The day he heard he had been accepted at Starfleet Academy had been a great day in his life; the one when he had graduated top of his class had been an even greater one. But now here he stood, travelling bag in hand, on what was probably the most wonderful, unbelievable day of his whole life: in just under fifteen minutes he was due to join the much-envied crew of the USS Enterprise.

The very name sent a small shiver down his spine. It was not really so many months since the famous Captain James T. Kirk had taken command of her, he knew; and Captain Kirk hadn't been all that famous at the time. But if he hadn't been then, he certainly was now, what with the adventures and achievements of the Enterprise since he had become her Captain. In those months James Kirk had become one of the most respected, admired and honoured Starship Commanders in the Federation, and a place in the crew of his ship one of the most sought-after positions by all the students at the Academy, from the lowliest - not that any position on a Starship could really be termed that, both metaphorically and literally - maintenance technician to the most studious aspiring Science Officer. And he, Pavel Chekov, had actually won a place on that crew. He could still hardly believe it. When he had heard that he had been accepted not just as a crew member but as the Enterprise's Navigator, it had seemed too fantastic to be true. And in no more than a few minutes from now he would be beamed aboard her.

As he stood waiting the other four new Ensigns due to beam on board the Enterprise began to assemble nearby, and then came over to join him. They had all met each other during the course of the last few days while waiting at the Starbase for their new ship. Although the others had all served on Starships before, albeit for a mere few months, the fact that the less-experienced Chekov was to be a member of the Enterprise's Bridge Crew gave him a certain status with his new colleagues, something which he had expected might be the case, and yet which still gave him a strange sensation when it actually happened.

"Well, Chekov - it won't be long now!" said Davies, an Ensign due to serve in Engineering, grinning all over his face.

The other three new crew members, two more young men and a young woman, were also wearing silly grins. Chekov was completely positive that he looked exactly the same; they all felt excited, highly-trained members of Starfleet or not.

Chekov made a mental note that he would not be wearing such an expression when he arrived on the Enterprise. He was to be Ship's Navigator, one of the most important posts on the Starship, and it wouldn't do to have Captain Kirk thinking he wasn't up to it. He knew how important first impressions could be, and he was determined to make a good one.

Chekov checked his wrist chronometer. "The Enterprise is due to rendezvous in 6.3 minutes, Davies," he replied.

The others nodded their heads. They were finding the wait increasingly irritating.

For several minutes more they stood making small talk; about Starfleet news they had all discussed before; about the show that Andorian had made of himself in the Starbase's bar the previous evening. Just when they had exhausted every topic of conversation they could think of offhand, the Starbase's loudspeaker system came into operation.

"The USS Enterprise, Captain James T. Kirk commanding, is now in parking orbit. It is requested that the expected new crew members report to the Transporter for immediate beam-up."

The voice of the Starbase computer had worded the order as a request, but none of them needed a second telling in any case. Before another thirty seconds had passed they had all presented themselves to the transporter operator.

Their credentials were checked, and after a few seconds communication with the Starship the rather stern-looking Lieutenant told them to step onto the transporter platform - the Enterprise was ready for them.

As Chekov stepped up he was sure that his heart missed several beats. The time has come, Pavel, he told himself firmly. He had time only to make sure his face was wearing a suitably serious expression, then he felt the sensation of the Enterprise's transporter taking effect.

A few seconds later Chekov found himself standing in the place he had most wanted to be since as long as he could remember, aboard a Federation Starship as her Navigator - and the USS Enterprise, what was more.

He breathed a small sigh of relief. Captain Kirk had not, after all, come to greet his new crew members. In the Transporter Room were only two people apart from themselves - a man who was obviously the Transporter Chief, and an Oriental-looking Lieutenant who wore the insignia of Helmsman.

"Welcome to the Enterprise," said the man in a friendly manner. "I'm Lieutenant Sulu. Which of you is Ensign Chekov?"

This is it, Pavel, said Chekov to himself, swallowing nervously and hoping it didn't show. He knew that in all likelihood this was the man he was going to have to work with most. Lt. Sulu seemed friendly enough, though; suddenly Chekov had the feeling that everything was going to be alright.

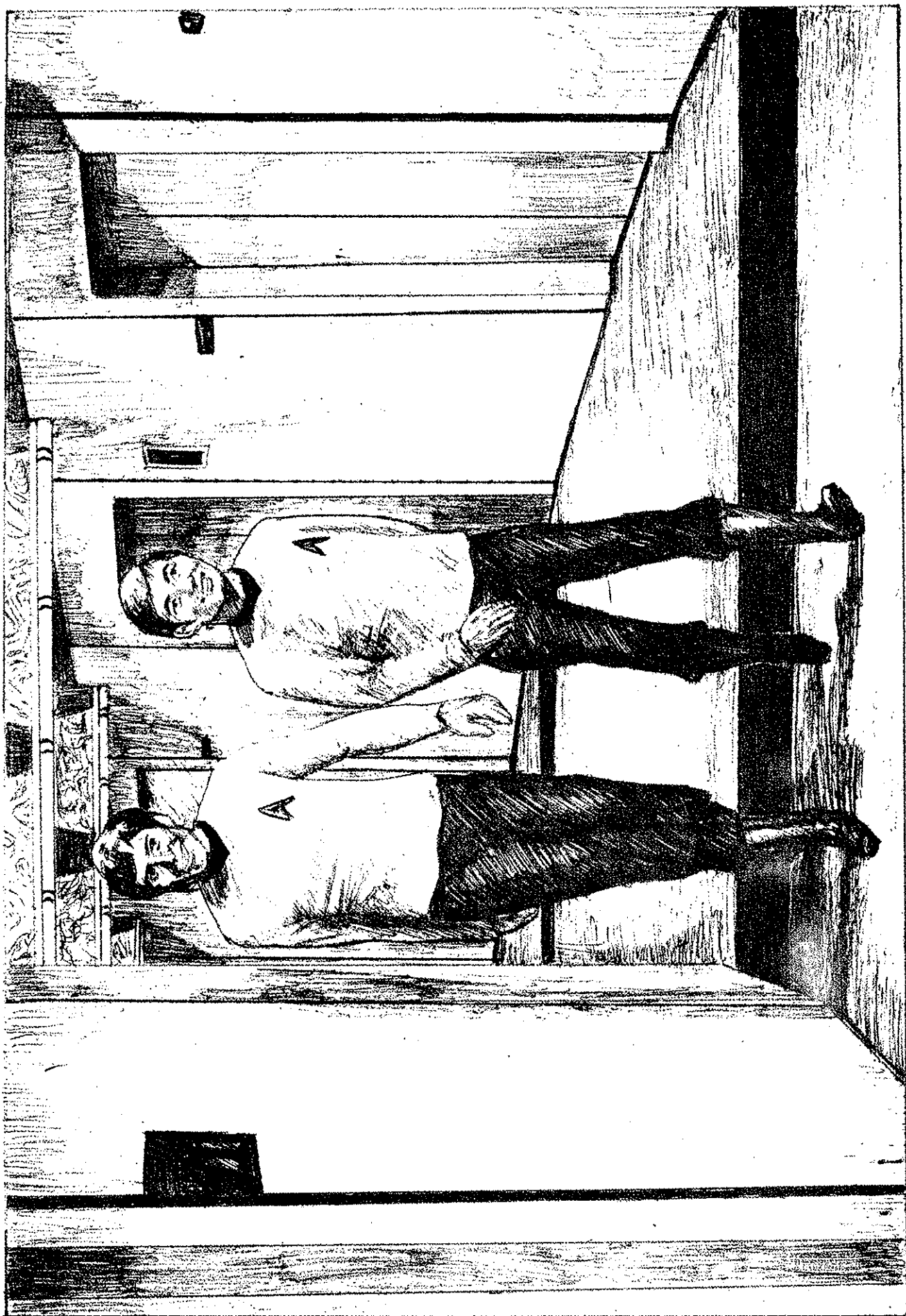
As it turned out Sulu had come to meet the newest member of the Enterprise's Bridge Crew on the orders of Captain Kirk. Sulu had explained to him that under normal circumstances the Captain would have come to meet him personally, but he had to beam down to the Starbase for debriefing; something to do with a recent skirmish with the Romulans, apparently, and had therefore been unable to do so.

As he continued to show Chekov around the ship Sulu explained further that although it was not normal policy for Starship Captains to greet new crew members personally, Captain Kirk was different; that was one of the things that made the Enterprise the best ship in the Fleet. Chekov grinned back at his new friend; he had thought as much.

Sulu also proved to be as friendly a person as Chekov had guessed he was, and by the time the Helmsman had finished showing him the ship, his assigned quarters, and had delivered him to Sickbay for the routine physical given to all new crew members by the ship's surgeon, Chekov knew he and Sulu were going to get on okay.

Half an hour later he left Sickbay, feeling yet more at ease. Dr. McCoy, though obviously a dedicated medical officer and something of a stickler, had a wry sense of humour, and had succeeded in putting the new Navigator in a more confident state of mind. About one thing, however, he had done just the opposite. Chekov had learned from Dr. McCoy that he would have to work in closer contact than he had thought with the awe-inspiring Commander Spock.

Not that Chekov had ever met him, of course, but he was one of the more



imposing figures in Starfleet, and what Dr. McCoy had said about him didn't make it sound as though the Science Officer would accept any mistakes readily. Yet somehow Chekov thought he detected something more behind the Doctor's remarks; respect, perhaps? Chekov didn't have much time to think about it just then. There was less than an hour left before he was due on the Bridge for his first spell of duty, and that gave him plenty to occupy his mind.

In just over forty minutes from then, Chekov found himself walking along a corridor towards the turbolift. He arrived, stepped inside, and in a firmly-controlled voice told the turbolift to take him to the Bridge.

But he hadn't preaped himself for what happened next. It seemed he wasn't the only person due on the Bridge at that time. At the next deck level the turbolift stopped, the doors opened, and Ensign Pavel Chekov found himself face to face with no less a person than his new Commanding Officer, who was accompanied by someone who could only be Mr. Spock.

The two officers stepped in, and the Vulcan gave the order for the turbolift to proceed to the Bridge. The Captain smiled enquiringly at the young Ensign, who suddenly found himself wearing the silly grin he had been determined not to wear.

"Ah - Ensign Chekov, isn't it?" asked James Kirk, glad to have the opportunity of greeting his new Navigator which had been denied him by red tape.

"Yes, sir," replied Chekov, not knowing what else to say. "I'm glad to be on board, sir."

"And we're glad to have you, Mr. Chekov," answered Kirk. "This is my First Officer, Mr. Spock. You'll be working with him quite often."

"Ensign." The tall Vulcan nodded a greeting. He was certainly awe-inspiring, but now that he had met him Chekov didn't feel so bad. He sensed that here was someone who indeed would not tolerate mistakes; but then, surely that was as it should be. Chekov didn't intend to make any, anyway.

All further talk was ended by the turbolift's arrival at the Bridge. He had worked on Bridge mock-ups before, of course, and on other Starships used for training, but somehow this first view of the nerve-centre of the greatest Starship in the Fleet gave him a sensation bordering on wonder. He stepped out of the turbolift after the Captain and the First Officer. The stern Vulcan strode off towards the library computer station, obviously eager to get on with his work. The man sitting in the Navigator's seat noticed their arrival and stood up.

Chekov was impressed. He knew the reputation of this crew, but seeing it in action was something else entirely. It was clear that every person on the Bridge, from the conscientious Mr. Spock to the Navigator who had known who he, Chekov, was, knew exactly what he or she was doing, and what was going on in his or her section of the Enterprise at every single moment. He hoped he wasn't going to let any of them down.

The off-going Navigator walked past Chekov and the Captain, gave a friendly nod to Chekov, then stepped into the turbolift. Captain Kirk turned, smiled, and gestured with his hand that Chekov should take the empty seat. Kirk was smiling, but Chekov had the feeling that his Captain would not take to errors any more than Mr. Spock would.

Why did he keep thinking about mistakes? He had been top of his class at the Academy, that was one of the reasons why he, and not one of a dozen others, had been posted to this particular ship. He was not in the habit of doing anything other than completely correctly, especially where his work was concerned. Perhaps that was one of the reasons why he had suddenly begun to look forward to working with the Vulcan after all.

Chekov walked forward, stepped down, and took his place at the navigation console. Lt. Sulu was at the helm; he gave him a friendly grin as he sat down,



and muttered something about being in 'the hot seat'. Chekov knew that that particular phrase was usually reserved for referring to the command chair, but in this case he could quite understand Sulu's use of it. He grinned wryly back. There was no escaping now; he was here, and he had to do his best. No, more than that - he had to be perfect.

From behind him came the voice of Captain Kirk. "I am sure you all know by now that this gentleman is our new Ship's Navigator, Ensign Chekov," said Kirk. "I know you all join me in welcoming him to the Enterprise."

Chekov glanced quickly round the Bridge, exchanging nods with the rest of the Bridge personnel, then he quickly looked back at his console. In a moment Kirk was going to ask him to plot a course somewhere. The moment had almost arrived.

"We are ordered to proceed to Vega IV, in order to pick up several... ah... important personages." Kirk paused for a moment, and grinned; the crew all knew he thought exactly the same of diplomatic missions as most of them did - a necessary evil. And then the moment did come. "Mr. Chekov - lay in a course for Vega IV."

Chekov's fingers were already flying over the navigation console. He hardly needed to think, now he was actually doing what he had always wanted to do, and what he had trained all those years for; his reactions were so automatic that there was virtually no chance of his making even a marginal error - there was an infinitely greater chance that he would forget to breathe, his knowledge of the stars was so ingrained. But he had never before had in his hands alone the safety of a great Starship and all its crew; the responsibility was sobering, to say the least.

Before two and a half seconds had passed Chekov had finished plotting the course.

"Course laid in, sir," reported Chekov, trying not to sound too pleased with himself.

But Kirk was impressed. He knew Spock would be monitoring the new Navigator's every calculation at his science station, and there was no chance of anything going seriously wrong. Not that he expected anything to - Ensign Pavel Chekov had come highly recommended, and the new Ensign's speed in complying with his order was commendable. Yet Kirk knew the moment was almost bound to come when his eager young Ensign would err through sheer nervousness. It would come, as it nearly always did, and he and Spock were waiting for it.

"Mr. Sulu," said Kirk, "ahead warp factor 2."

Sulu expertly flicked a few switches, and there was a barely noticable hum as the great engines came to life. The Enterprise broke away from her parking orbit. For the first time in his life Chekov had navigated a Starship out into space single handedly.

He knew Mr. Spock was keeping tabs on him, of course - that was standard procedure - but as the Enterprise got under way to Vega IV, and the minutes passed without incident, Chekov began to feel a little more relaxed. He had performed perfectly so far, and he could sense his Captain was pleased with him.

But where a little nervousness had actually served to help him, over-confidence was to prove his undoing. And that was unusual in so serious a young man who was habitually conscientious and thorough; but then there was nothing usual about navigating a great Starship, especially the Starship Enterprise, through the vast distances of the galaxy.

It seemed that a mid-course direction change was necessary in order to reach the Vega system by the most direct route. An easy, simple course change that a first-year student at the Academy ought to be able to complete without any difficulty. A course change so completely without hazard of any kind that Chekov made a complete and utter hash of it.

And not only did he get the computations wrong; he anticipated Kirk's order by a fraction of a second, and pressed the wrong switch almost before Kirk had finished giving the order. In horror he realised what he had done, but so did Sulu; the Helmsman quickly leaned over and pressed all the right switches before Spock could give the inevitable warning and the whole Bridge crew would know what Chekov had done - the Science Officer would have known what had happened at the instant the Navigator made his mistake. If Chekov had known Spock a little longer he might well have suspected that Spock, knowing Sulu would take exactly the action he had done, had deliberately refrained from speaking out to save the new Ensign further embarrassment.

But then Chekov had not known Spock, or Kirk, that long, and while Sulu stared resolutely at the viewscreen, refusing to allow even the hint of a smile to creep on his face, Chekov just sat there in misery, waiting for the explosion that was bound to come from his Captain.

But Kirk did not explode. "Mr. Chekov," he said quietly, but in a tone that sounded more menacing to poor Chekov than if he had, "on this ship I do expect my more experienced officers to make decisions on their own; but you are not yet an experienced officer. I would be grateful if next time you waited for my order, and that when you have waited for that order, that you get it right. Please take more care in future."

Chekov was mortified. He was grateful that the Captain hadn't given him a real ticking-off, or worse still, dismissed him from the Bridge, and James Kirk had been kind enough not to raise his voice enough for the rest of the Bridge crew to hear, but somehow that made it all worse. And Kirk, Sulu and Spock knew. What would the Vulcan think of him? How could he ever forgive himself for letting them all down?

But even if the Bridge crew had heard they would have thought little of it. It had been apparent to Kirk, Spock and Sulu from the first half-minute that here was a new crew member with the potential to make a very good Ship's Navigator indeed. And Kirk knew, had expected, that Chekov would make an error of some kind or other; and it hadn't been really serious. If Chekov had been too perfect Kirk would have worried more. Spock understood that, too. Humans weren't Vulcans, after all.

And so they continued on their faster-than-light way to Vega IV with a humble, self-condemning Chekov even more determined than before to do everything so perfectly that his Captain and Mr. Spock would never have any further need to rebuke him. He just couldn't imagine how Kirk could trust him with the navigation of his ship after what he had just done.

But Kirk was really quite pleased with Chekov; he knew someone who would fit in with the crew of the Enterprise when he saw one, and he could recognise superior ability in the field of Starship Navigation when he saw that. Not that he was going to tell Chekov that for the moment, of course. For the moment it would do Ensign Pavel Chekov good to sweat a little.

They had been travelling at warp 2 for an hour when it was unexpectedly demonstrated to Chekov just why life aboard a Federation Starship was reputed to be eventful. The Chief Communications Officer suddenly swivelled round in her chair and spoke to the Captain.

"I'm picking up a distress call, sir," she informed him, turning around to alter a setting in mid-sentence. "It's faint, but I can pinpoint it fairly easily."

Kirk quickly glanced at Spock, who looked up from his viewer long enough to nod confirmation.

"How far, Lieutenant, and who is it?" Kirk asked the obvious questions.

"Less than a parsec, Captain," she replied, then broke off to listen to more information coming through to her. "It seems their craft has been damaged

by asteroids, Captain, and they need help urgently. They say they're the Auriga Star."

"Inform them that help is on its way, Lieutenant," ordered Kirk. "Then send a message to Vega IV to inform them of our possible late arrival."

"Mr. Chekov - Mr. Spock will feed a series of coordinates through to you. Please lay in a course as soon as possible."

All round the Bridge a chorus of "Ayes" sounded as the crew set to their various tasks, Chekov included. Here was his first emergency, and he was surprised a little at the speed with which the Vulcan sent the coordinates through to his console from the library computer. He had heard of the Vulcan's ability, but seeing it in action was another thing entirely. Quickly squashing a momentary feeling of inferiority, Chekov laid in the course and reported the fact to Kirk, who barely gave him a nod before telling Sulu to take her ahead at high speed. Chekov knew that here was an emergency, and Kirk had other things to think about, but surely he had noticed how speedily he had carried out his orders? After what had happened before, he just had to impress the Captain; he just had to!

After they had been on their way for some minutes Spock left his science station and came to stand beside Kirk, hands behind his back.

"Yes, Spock?" asked Kirk enquiringly, knowing full well that the Vulcan had something to tell him.

"I have discovered something more about the Auriga Star, Captain," Spock replied evenly, but nevertheless in a tone that made Kirk sit up and take notice.

"And?"

"According to my information, the Auriga Star was stolen from her owners - a deep-space trading organisation - some months ago. It is reported she is now operating under an extremely varied - an dubious - crew, as a... I believe the term is 'privateer'."

"Pirates?" Chekov couldn't help himself.

"It would appear so, Mr. Chekov," replied the Vulcan, his right eyebrow rising. "It is not the first time we have encountered such."

"No, sir," said the Navigator, feeling somewhat abashed, not realising that Spock had meant only to reassure the new Ensign, not make him feel small.

"Well," broke in Kirk, "pirates or not, they need our help, and that is what they're going to get."

By the time they were nearing the position from which the distress signal had originated, it was becoming apparent that this rescue was going to involve a complex problem in navigation. From various reports Uhura had received from Starfleet since getting the signal, they had deduced that the Auriga Star had attempted the foolhardy action of hiding in the asteroid belt while under pursuit from some dissatisfied Klingon customers. They had succeeded in shaking their pursuers, but in the process had also succeeded in sustaining a large amount of damage from the asteroids. It was beginning to look as though the Enterprise wasn't going to arrive a moment too soon.

The problem was that navigating a Starship the size of the Enterprise through an asteroid belt of the density of this one was not an easy task at all; and that task fell to Chekov, who at that moment was still feeling self-recriminatory and miserable. He didn't allow himself to think about the fact that the smaller pirate vessel hadn't succeeded in it; instead he concentrated on the job in hand, thanking providence that Sulu was at the helm. He had only worked with him a few hours, but already he had become firmly convinced that his new friend was the finest Helmsman in the Fleet, and just then he needed all the help he could get.

The Enterprise penetrated deeper into the asteroid belt; further and further, without mishap. Chekov hadn't seen the glances which had passed between the Captain and the Science Officer. Kirk had at first thought of sending for the Second Navigator to take over - Chekov was, after all, on his first shift of Bridge duty - but Spock had shaken his head and had quietly informed his Captain that Mr. Chekov was quite capable of doing it himself. The Vulcan knew how important self-confidence was in Humans, and to replace Chekov now might well damage his potential. Both he and Kirk could see that the young Ensign was keeping his personal feelings under control admirably. Unfortunately, Chekov himself was thinking just the opposite.

A call came from the Transporter Room; Mr. Scott reported that they were in transporter range. At almost the same moment Spock informed Kirk that his sensors indicated the Auriga Star was more badly damaged than they had first supposed; he suggested that they beam her crew members aboard the Enterprise immediately - the Auriga Star's breakup was imminent.

Once again it was brought home to Chekov just what kind of a crew he had joined. He doubted if anyone else but Mr. Scott could have beamed those pirates aboard while their craft was in the process of disintegrating. But beam them aboard he did, while the Auriga Star dissolved into a million pieces before their eyes.

Captain Kirk, however, was obviously a man who didn't let a little thing like a crisis take his mind off the business in hand. Chekov couldn't help grinning to himself when he heard the Captain order that their 'guests' be taken to the brig.

And then his grin grew wider; with a sense of relief greater than he had thought possible, Chekov realised he had actually completed a complex, hazardous series of manouvres without even thinking, almost, and as perfectly as any Navigator in the fleet. Suddenly he knew with absolute certainty that everything was okay, that he had made it. Whatever happened now, there was no way he was going to mess this up again.

But now that the rescue had been effected successfully, they still had the matter of navigating out of the asteroid belt before them. Once he had ascertained that the pirates were safe, Kirk immediately gave the order for Chekov to navigate the Enterprise out of danger, the sooner the better.

Chekov, by now feeling a real member of the Bridge crew, his past error behind him, and enjoying rather than fearing the sense of responsibility he felt, made the calculations extremely rapidly and with confidence. Captain Kirk, feeling more and more certain that his new Ensign had indeed been the correct choice for Ship's Navigator, told him and Sulu to get them out of there.

Working as though they had been colleagues for years, the Navigator and Helmsman skilfully piloted the huge Starship between the asteroids, knowing full well that the slightest mistake might result in the end of them all.

But this was the Enterprise, and such things did not happen where she was the ship involved. It was not far to go now, not far to the edge of the belt and open, safe space.

Chekov spoke a few quiet words to Sulu, verbally confirming a coordinate, and was more than surprised not to receive an answer. He dared not take his eyes from his console, but became aware nonetheless that something was very wrong with the Helmsman.

Kirk had seen it too. Sulu looked... unsteady. "Mr. Sulu, is everything all right?" enquired the Captain. He too received no answer.

"Keptin!" Cheov almost yelled. "He iss not operating the helm!"

Chekov's warning came almost simultaneously with Sulu's sudden collapse to the deck. He lay there, unconscious and ashen.

For several frightening moments, the terror of which he hoped never to



experience again, Chekov found himself operating both Helm and Navigation, only just in time to stop the Enterprise colliding fatally with a large asteroid. But he didn't know how long he could keep up operating both positions. Frantically he worked the controls, avoiding yet another seemingly certain collision. The next one was bound to hit them - he just couldn't keep this up!

He didn't have to. Although it seemed like hours to Chekov, barely two seconds had passed since Sulu's unexpected collapse when he found the Science Officer at his side, calmly taking over the Helmsman's position and operating the controls as if it was he who occupied that seat every day, and not the fallen Sulu.

Behind him, Chekov heard Kirk ordering a medical team and a replacement Helmsman to the Bridge. As he concentrated on navigating, he was barely aware of the Captain bending down at Sulu's side, a concerned expression on his face.

And then it was over. He and Mr. Spock had together brought the Enterprise safely out of the asteroid belt into the safety of open space.

At that moment the turbolift arrived, bringing both the medical team, headed by Dr. McCoy, and the relief Helmsman. The latter took over from the Vulcan, who immediately joined the Captain and the Doctor by the side of the fallen Sulu.

"How is he, Bones?" Chekov heard the Captain ask.

They were back on course for Vega IV now, and it was safe for Chekov to turn and look at what was going on. Everyone else on the Bridge was, anyway.

McCoy gave Sulu a shot of something, then looked up at Kirk. His expression was serious but not that serious. Chekov decided to relax.

"It's some kind of fever, Jim," McCoy replied. "It's not serious now that I've isolated the antidote. I was on my way up to the Bridge when the call came through - I've got the rest of the landing party who were with Sulu on that last planetfall in Sickbay in the same condition. They were all brought in a few minutes ago, all unconscious with the same thing. Sulu just held out a little longer than the rest of them, that's all."

"Then he'll be okay?" asked Kirk, the relief in his voice obvious.

McCoy nodded. It was only then that the Science Officer stood up and returned silently to his station. Chekov watched thoughtfully. It was no wonder the Captain clearly valued him so much, and he thought he began to understand what it was that he had detected beneath McCoy's gruff remarks. Chekov grinned to himself, and turned back to his console.

Sulu was carried off to Sickbay, and the Bridge crew was left alone again. Behind him, Kirk stood up.

"Mr. Spock," he said to the Vulcan, "you have the con. I shall visit Sickbay and check on Mr. Sulu's and the other crew members' condition."

He was about to go to the turbolift, then instead took a step down to the Navigation console. Chekov felt a pat on his back.

"Well done, Mr. Chekov," said the voice of his Captain. "Glad to have you aboard."

With that James Kirk did turn and leave the Bridge. Chekov was sure he had gone completely bright red. Not that it mattered - Ship's Navigator he was, and Ship's Navigator he would stay. And his Captain had said 'Well done.'

His first shift over, Chekov walked down the corridor towards his quarters. The lights were dimming, heralding the artificial 'night' of the Starship. At an observation port he halted, and looked out through the large window at the beauty of the stars, at the colours of the universe, and its many wonders. Chekov was happy; very tired, but happy.

He was just about to continue on to his quarters and sleep, when he saw the

figure of the First Officer walking along the corridor towards him, apparently on his way to his own quarters. Chekov turned, deciding to pluck up the courage to bid the Vulcan goodnight.

But instead of walking past Spock came over and stood by him, hands behind his back, every inch a Commander.

"Ah - Mr. Chekov," began the Vulcan.

"Yes, sir?"

"I was most impressed with the calm and efficient way you conducted yourself during the crisis in the asteroid belt."

"Oh - thank you, sir." Calm? Chekov didn't think he had been calm! And after everything that had happened?

"Yes, Ensign - and I must add my comments to the Captain's. We are glad to have you aboard. Goodnight, Mr. Chekov."

"Goodnight, sir."

Chekov watched as the dignified figure of the Vulcan made his way down to the corner of the corridor, then round it and out of sight. He could hardly believe it; first the Captain had said he had done well, and now he had managed to impress the Mr. Spock! What a day! Had they actually expected him to make a mistake? Suddenly he felt a great surge of loyalty - if anyone ever said anything about the Vulcan's lack of sensitivity, they would have him to answer to!

He turned back to the observation port, to the stars once more. Out there, somewhere, was a planet called Earth, and at that moment there came to him the certain knowledge that he had been right; all these years he had been right. Here, on the valiant Starship Enterprise, out among the stars, he was more at home than he had ever been on his home planet.

Chekov was in the place he had always been meant to be.

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#### THE OTHER HALF I NEED

(Inspired by  
"The Enemy Within")

"Spock... if this doesn't work..."

"Understood, Captain."

How could you know, Spock,  
What I myself did not?  
How could you know the fear  
That pervaded my very soul?  
I knew that our plan could go so wrong,  
That the ultimate goodbye could occur,  
And I felt the need to tell you  
What we had never put in words.  
But those words would not come...  
Yet you knew.  
You sensed that need,  
And knew what I wanted to say...  
And understood.  
And you were there when I returned,  
Whole, complete, once more the Captain.  
Your eyes met mine, briefly,  
But that look said all without the need of words.  
I ordered my men to be brought aboard,  
And I knew all would be all right once more.  
Our minds joined, complementing each other  
In the ultimate understanding.  
The other half I needed,  
Making me one.  
More than a brother. More than a friend.

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\*\*\*\*Karen Hayden\*\*\*\*

PARADESE MISSED by Janette Burton

"Standard orbit, sir," stated Sulu as he gave his Captain a sideways glance. There was more than usual excitement in the Oriental eyes as they caught Kirk's.

"I can see you are anxious to get down there," teased the Captain as he gestured towards the image of the planet on the viewscreen. "It does look very inviting."

Indeed it did. Morenia Alpha was in appearance much like Earth, with expanses of blue oceans and green/brown land masses, all beautifully scattered over with wispy whorls of white cloud.

Kirk turned from Sulu to the science station. "If Mr. Spock is ready the pair of you may as well be on your way."

"Aye aye, sir," enthused the Navigator who, noticing that Mr. Spock was already halfway to the turbolift, hurriedly made some adjustments to his console and went to join him.

They proceeded first to the botany lab to collect the equipment they would need for sample collecting. A previous fleeting visit to Morenia Alpha by the USS Endeavour had reported a flourishing flora, but very little fauna. In the reports Sulu had read, the planet sounded like a botanist's paradise. When the Enterprise had been assigned to collect botanical samples he eagerly volunteered himself for the rather routine task. He would have been quite happy to do the sampling on his own, but had no reservations on learning that the Vulcan First Officer was to be his companion. Sulu held Mr. Spock in great respect, as the rest of the crew did, and felt privileged to have the chance to work with him one to one.

Having collected their equipment the two proceeded to the transporter room where Mr. Scott was ready and waiting to put them down on the planet's surface.

"Coordinates laid in, Mr. Spock. Ready when you are, sir," stated the Chief Engineer from behind the console, his hands flitting across the board in a pre-transport check.

The Vulcan and the Oriental positioned themselves on the platform. "Very well, Mr. Scott. Energise," ordered Spock.

Aboard the Enterprise all appeared normal. The two shapes dematerialised, and Scott knew from his panel that they had materialised on the planet's surface.

In fact Spock and Sulu were far from all right. Instead of finding themselves among the lush verdant pastures of low-lying hills as they had expected, they stood in what was obviously an arctic area.

The cold speared them like a knife. Icy winds howled all about them, and the rocky terrain was white with freshly-fallen snow.

Spock was the first to come to his senses, and reached behind his belt for his communicator. "Spock to Enterprise." Memories of a previous encounter on an ice planet were imposing themselves in his thoughts. He knew that this time he could not rely on the dubious effects of Mr. Atoz's time portal to fortify him against the intense cold - the same effects which, on that occasion, had nearly resulted in McCoy's death.

"Enterprise here, Mr. Spock," replied Uhura.

"Have Mr. Scott beam us back aboard the ship immediately. It would seem we have been transported to the wrong coordinates."

"Message received, sir. Will comply," she answered.

Kirk was already on the line to Scott before Uhura had finished speaking.

"Scotty, bring Spock and Sulu back now. Something's gone wrong." He did not try to hide the worry in his voice.

"Aye aye, sir," was a rather puzzled Engineer's reply.

Kirk let a few seconds tick by before punching a line through to the transporter room once more. "Scotty, have you got them?"

He could hear muffled swear words filtering over the intercom, and knew something had gone wrong. "Scotty, what's happening?"

"Captain, I'm receivin' the signal from Mr. Spock's communicator, but I dinna seem able to lock on to the coordinates. I just keep beamin' up fresh air!"

"I'm on my way," said Kirk as he rose from the command chair. "Uhura, get Mr. Spock again for me."

"Channel open, sir," she replied, and slightly spun her chair round, allowing Kirk to speak via the intercom on her panel. He was close enough for her to see the veins pulsing in his neck, and the lines of worry etched in every tense muscle of his face.

"Mr. Spock, what is your status?"

Agonising seconds of silence slipped by as Kirk waited for a reply.

"Captain Kirk. Sulu here, sir."

"Sulu! What the hell's happening? Where's Spock?" demanded Kirk as his tension and worry mounted.

"Mr. Spock's suffering from the cold, sir. He... er... um... he let me speak. Why haven't we been beamed up, sir?"

"Temporary transporter malfunction," lied Kirk. He had no way of knowing if it was temporary or not. "You say it's cold there. Explain."

"I think we must have beamed down to an arctic region. It looks like some sort of glaciated area. Sure is cold, though!"

"I see... Keep broadcasting your signal, and try and find some shelter. I'll get back to you. Kirk out." Then, on his way to the turbolift, "I'll be in the transporter room."

Once inside the lift Jim did his best to quell the pangs of worry that were mounting for his Vulcan friend. He made it to the transporter room in record time to find Scotty and another red-shirted crewman intent over a mass of exposed circuitry. The lights on the console were all out.

"Scotty, have you found the trouble?" asked Kirk, a wave of dejections sweeping over him on seeing the dead panel.

"Aye, I've found it all right, Captain, but I canna say I like the look of it!" sighed Scott without looking up from the tangle of connections. "The calibration on the coordinate tie-in system has slipped. All the circuits through it are going to need re-aligning."

"How long, Scotty?" Kirk knew to expect the worst.

"Eight hours, maybe seven, but even working with the computer the calculations take time. Now if Mr. Spock were here... we could perhaps get it done in five or six."

"Mr. Spock's in trouble, Scotty. It seems the transporter put him and Sulu down somewhere in the polar region. If I don't get them back on board soon, they'll die of exposure."

Scott's gaze lifted from the circuits to meet Kirk's worried eyes. He too knew what cold could do to Vulcans.

"Captain, I..."

His words were cut short by Kirk. "Do what you can here, Mr. Scott. I'm going down in a shuttlecraft." Kirk punched the button on the wall intercom. "Uhura, inform Mr. Sp... Mr Sulu that a shuttlecraft is on its way to collect them. I'll be in Sickbay. Kirk out."

He did not wait for a reply, but quickly went to find McCoy. "Bones, Spock and Sulu are in trouble. Collect your medikit and some warm clothes. We are going down to the polar region of the planet."

While the computer came up with the appropriate clothing McCoy extracted a fuller explanation from Kirk, and soon he was just as eager to get aboard the shuttlecraft as his Captain.

"Captain, Dr. McCoy, I request permission to come along." It was Nurse Chapel.

Kirk and McCoy exchanged glances, each understanding instantly the reason for her request.

Seeing the hesitant look on their faces, she went on to explain. "It would seem that both Mr. Spock and Mr. Sulu might require medical assistance by the time we get there, so another medic would be valuable."

"Very well, Nurse, as long as the Captain has no objections," replied McCoy.

"No objections," smiled Kirk. He understood her motives just as well as McCoy did. Hell, he was worried about Spock too.

Somewhere in the icy wastes of Morenia Alpha's North Pole two lone figures struggled against the cold wind.

"Tricorder readings confirm these rocks to be limestone. With luck we might find a cave," Sulu commented as he slung the tricorder back over his shoulder and once more slipped his arm around Mr. Spock's waist in support.

"I do not l...like trusting to luck, Mr. S...Sulu, b... but it w...would seem we have l...little ch...choice," stammered the Vulcan as he forced his mouth to work, even though the effort made his frozen face muscles ache.

Leaning heavily on the Oriental's slight frame Spock willed his numb legs into action and the two set off once more. He considered making some sort of apology for being such a burden on Sulu, but that was illogical. In any case, he knew he would not make it to the rocks, and then his companion could go on alone and save himself. Or so he thought!

The shuttlecraft and its **company of** three made a smooth exit from the hangar deck. Captain Kirk sat at the controls and manoeuvred the tiny vehicle with subconscious ease while the active part of his brain worried over his Vulcan friend and his long time Navigator.

McCoy sat alongside his Captain, reading the anguish under the cool exterior as he watched Jim's hands flit over the controls and position the craft for a controlled entry into the atmosphere.

"Kirk to Enterprise."

"Enterprise here, sir," responded Uhura.

"Prepare for communications blackout. Ten seconds to atmosphere. Kirk out."

Minutes ticked away slowly as the shuttlecraft speared its way through the upper atmosphere. The three companions inside sat in an eerie silence with only the occasional buffet of turbulence to break the uneasy monotony of enforced inactivity.

At last a burst of static erupted from the communications panel, and Uhura's voice came through to them.

"Enterprise to Captain Kirk."

"Kirk here."

"Captain, I have new coordinates for you, sir. Mr. Sulu has been in contact with the ship, and he and Mr. Spock have managed to find shelter in a cave. Their



position is 457/962/101."

"Thank you, Lieutenant. Did Sulu say anything about their condition?" asked Kirk, although he was not sure if he really wanted to hear the reply.

Uhura's tone dropped. "Sir, Mr. Sulu says Mr. Spock is now unconscious."

Kirk had expected as much, but even so there was a pause before he could speak. "Thank you, Lieutenant. Kirk out."

"Jim!" comforted McCoy as he reached across to place a hand on Kirk's arm. "It's probably for the best. At least while he's unconscious he won't be suffering."

Kirk did not reply. His thoughts were miles away.

"Captain Kirk," questioned Nurse Chapel from her seat behind the two men, "What's our estimated time of arrival?"

The directness of her question, and the obvious concern in her voice, broke Kirk's reverie. He turned to look at her.

"Twenty-two minutes, Nurse," he answered, and made an effort to smile.

"Thank you, sir."

Silence descended once again as each sank back into his or her own thoughts.

On the planet's surface Sulu had managed somehow to get Spock into the shelter of a small cave. The task had not been easy. Not only had he to battle against the wind, the cold, and the sheer weight of his Vulcan companion, but also against Spock's will. As the cold had begun to take its toll there came a point where the Vulcan felt he could no longer hold back his Human companion.

"Mr. S...Sulu, you must leave me and g...go on alone. I order y...you to s...save yourself. There is no l... longer any hope for me."

"No, Mr. Spock. I can't do that."

"It was not a re...request. I order you..." Spock swayed and sank to his knees, his whole body trembling. "I order you... I cannot l...let your life be sacrificed ne...needlessly. S...Sulu, leave me."

Spock could not understand why this subordinate officer should disobey an order. His mind felt numb, everything was becoming distant, even the howl of the wind was now only a faint rumble far away. The white snow beneath his hands reflected back images in his mind's eye. He could no longer distinguish fantasy from reality. The last vestiges of time and place had slipped away.

Sulu shouted in the Vulcan's ear, but Spock was <sup>oblivious</sup> of everything, enveloped in the hazy world of his subconscious. In this realm his Human half stood on an equal footing with the Vulcan. Conflict reigned.

Sulu felt panic rising. In front of him the crumpled heap of his First Officer was becoming covered in the still-falling snow. Spock had passed out, so now it was up to him.

It would have been easy to leave the Vulcan where he lay, but Sulu knew that was a path he could not take. How could he ever face James T. Kirk with the knowledge that he had deserted Spock in order to save his own life? He had no choice.

Abandoning what remained of the equipment except for tricorder and communicator, he heaved the Vulcan over his shoulder. Staggering under the sheer weight and awkwardness of his burden he gritted his teeth and set his mind to putting one foot in front of the other.

Although only slight of frame, Sulu possessed surprising strength and powers of endurance. Now, more than ever before, he was grateful for the many hours of hard work put in in the Enterprise gym. He liked to consider himself a match

for anyone aboard when it came to martial arts or fencing, and he practiced regularly, keeping himself in good shape.

This day the young officer exceeded all limits of endurance he had ever had need to call upon before in his entire life. The struggle through the lonely, icy wilderness would have sapped the strength of any man. Only Sulu's dogged determination to save the best Science Officer in the Fleet, and consequently Starfleet's most prestigious Captain/First Officer duo, spurred him on.

He felt as though every last ounce of strength had been squeezed from his body when at last he found the desperately needed shelter.

Now the unconscious form of the Vulcan lay prostrate in the driest corner of the dank cavern. Beside him crouched Sulu, watching the shallow breathing as Spock's chest rhythmically rose and fell. The Vulcan features were drawn and ghastly-pale. Tiny beads of cold sweat began to break out on the broad forehead, and Sulu gently wiped them away. The pale flesh felt cold and clammy even to his already chilled fingers.

The Vulcan stirred at the touch, his head slowly rolling to one side, and a slight murmur escaped the thinly-drawn lips.

"Mr. Spock, it won't be long now. The Enterprise is sending a shuttlecraft for us." Sulu felt the need to say something even though he knew that in all probability he was not being heard. "Hold on - help is on the way."

"No... Go back!"

The young officer could just make out the words. Spock was becoming delirious and talking in his sleep. Not knowing what else to do to settle the restless body he placed his hands on the tense Vulcan shoulders.

"Mr. Spock!" He squeezed gently. "Mr. Spock, try to rest. Captain Kirk's sending help..."

"Kirk! Jim... No, I can not... Please don't make me..." cried the unheeding voice as delirium swept over him once more.

The junior officer pulled his hands away quickly. His attempt to settle the Vulcan had not had the desired effect; indeed, Spock seemed worse. He found himself hoping desperately that the shuttle would soon arrive, becoming more worried for Spock's life as well as being aware that his own body was numb with cold. He could not feel his feet any more, and his hands were an ugly shade of blue.

He fumbled with the communicator, and eventually got through to Uhura. "S...Sulu to Enterprise."

"Enterprise here, Sulu. How are things down there?"

"Not s...so good. How much longer?"

"Estimate another ten minutes. Not long. I'll have a nice hot cup of coffee waiting for you," Uhura joked, although it did nothing to disguise her concern.

"Th...thanks."

"How is Mr. Spock?"

"D...did you have to ask? God knows how I'll face C...Captain K...Kirk if he dies! Sulu out." He flipped the communicator shut before Uhura could reply.

Jim's patience was wearing thin at the same rate as his pent-up worry was surfacing.

"Bones, how long do you think Spock can survive in temperatures as low as these?"

"Hell, I don't know, Jim! His extraordinary physique is difficult enough

to understand at the best of times."

"You are supposed to be the doctor!" shouted Kirk as he hammered a fist down on the console.

"GENTLEMEN!" asserted Nurse Chapel, seeing the need to intervene.

Both men turned in astonishment to look at the controlled female sitting patiently behind them. Each instantly knew the folly of their outburst, and marvelled at Christine's cool, collected control.

"Captain... Dr. McCoy... I didn't mean..."

"No, Nurse, we understand," interrupted Kirk. "And... thank you."

A smile crossed his face, and Christine had to look away from the penetrating hazel eyes as they read her embarrassment.

"Well, Bones, are you going to help me land this thing, or am I doing it single-handed?" joked the Captain after a few moments of uncomfortable silence.

"Ready when you are... sir," responded McCoy.

Spock's delirium had increased and his incoherent ramblings escalated. Sulu did not know how to help the Vulcan, being afraid to make physical contact again after his previous experience. He had tried talking to him, but that seemed to have no effect. Now he was forced to listen to the broken sentences as tumbled from the unconscious form.

"So sorry..." whispered Spock. "NO, Jim! McCoy, I... I am VULCAN... Edith... Jim! He knows, Doctor..."

Sulu was aware that he was listening to things deeply personal to the Vulcan, but there was no escaping it. He dared not leave his companion. Spock's whole body had started to shake and the Human was becoming exceedingly worried. Still the ramblings continued.

"Or die in trying... T'Pau, he is my friend... JIM!" It was almost a scream, and made Sulu jump. "Must disobey... Talos IV... Pike, Captain Pike... NO! Jim... Captain Kirk... Jim... Lock me away... Please, Jim!"

Sulu could not stand to listen any longer. He knew and admired the 'real' Mr. Spock too well to sit by and watch as the cold wreaked its terrible toll on the Vulcan. He could take no more, and swept Spock up into his arms, letting the once proud and noble head rest against his chest. He squeezed the cold body tightly to him, hoping somehow to quell the delirium.

"Mr. Spock, please. Please try to rest... Quiet, please... Shh... Not much longer... You've got to hold on."

Spock fell quiet, and seemed to be at peace. Only one whispered word slipped from his lips from time to time.

"Jim..."

It was like this that the rescuers from the shuttlecraft found them. Kirk entered the cave and stopped in his tracks at the sight. He thought Spock to be dead, and hardly noticed as McCoy and Chapel pushed past him to reach the entwined pair. Emptiness engulfed him as he watched with uncomprehending eyes while the medics set to work.

"Jim, he's alive!" exclaimed McCoy. "Jim, do you hear me? He's alive!"

Alive! The word echoed about Kirk before he understood. Falling to his knees beside the Vulcan he took the cold but familiar head onto his lap. A hypo hissed against Spock's shoulder, and Jim felt the unconscious body shudder in response.

"Spock?" he questioned. "Spock, can you hear me?"

Drawn Vulcan lips whispered the one word again. "Jim." But this time the corners of the pale mouth betrayed the stirrings of a smile. Relief flooded through Kirk.

"He's going to be all right, Jim," assured the doctor.

Kirk smiled. "Yes, he is, Bones." And then, remembering his other officer and friend, "What about Sulu?"

"He's going to be all right too, Captain," answered Nurse Chapel.

"Is he conscious?" asked Kirk, but without taking his eyes off the Vulcan.

"Yes, sir."

"Sulu," Kirk called, "you've done a fine job. Thank you."

"Th...thank you, sir," was the only response the Oriental could manage, but inside he was bubbling over with pride. Spock had held on till help had arrived, and Captain Kirk was thanking him. He vowed there and then to follow his Captain and First Officer into the jaws of hell if the need ever arose.

Kirk did not leave his Vulcan friend's side as the medic wrapped the two frozen officers in thermal blankets. He carried Spock unaided to the waiting shuttlecraft, while McCoy and Nurse Chapel helped Sulu walk along behind.

In the quiet of the Enterprise Sickbay Spock and Sulu lay in adjacent beds, a constant stream of would-be visitors being kept to a minimum by an authoritative Dr. McCoy. Now that the two were over the worst the good doctor was taking great pleasure in retaining them under his care. He always enjoyed having the final word over his fellow officers.

"Doctor McCoy, how much longer before I can get back to duty?" protested the Helmsman, and not for the first time that day.

"When I say you're ready and not before, so let's have no more arguing." McCoy stopped what he had been doing and turned to face Sulu. A broad grin spread across his face. Perhaps he had detained the young officer long enough.

"Very well, Mr. Sulu, you're discharged - but only on the condition you work a half-shift rota for the next few days."

"Aye aye, sir. Thank you."

The Oriental eyes were again bright as Sulu jumped down from the bed. He hesitated for a moment, looking down at the Vulcan lying quite still. The eyes were closed, but the alien face had regained some of its colour. Sulu felt he should say something to Spock, although just what he was not sure, and was relieved that the Vulcan was sleeping.

McCoy noticed the hesitation and misunderstood the young officer's motives.

"No point expecting any thanks from him," the doctor said, glancing at the First Officer.

It took Sulu a moment to comprehend the line of McCoy's thought, but when he did it angered him.

"Doctor, thanks is the last thing I need or want," responded Sulu, angrily walking out of Sickbay.

McCoy's eyes followed him all the way to the door, his tongue having been struck dumb by the comment. Had he missed something yet again?

"Doctor, you appear to be at a loss for words. Am I correct?"

Human eyes locked with Vulcan. "Mr. Spock! I should have known you'd been awake all along. Why did you lead Sulu to believe you were asleep?"

"In doing so I saved him from an emotional outburst he did not quite know how to handle," answered Spock calmly.

"So you've suddenly become an authority on Human emotion, have you?"

"Doctor, I may be Vulcan, but I am not insensitive."

As McCoy's brain worked overtime trying to find a suitable response he was saved the trouble by the entrance of the Chief Engineer.

"Leonard, I wonder if I might have a few words with Mr. Spock? That is, if he's up to receiving visitors, of course."

"Don't ask me - I'm only the doctor!" And with that McCoy left them for the solitude of his own office.

Deciding to ignore his friend's cryptic ~~comment~~ Scotty went over to the Vulcan.

"Mr. Spock, I'm pleased to see you're on the road to recovery. You gave us all quite a fright, you know."

"Thank you for your concern, Mr. Scott."

"I... er... came to explain about the transporter malfunction. I... owe you an apology. I should have noticed there was something wrong before I beamed you down."

"No need for apologies, Mr. Scott. From what I have been able to ascertain the fault occurred after you had ~~initiated~~ the beam-down process."

"At least you're going to be all right." And then changing the subject on to safer ground the Engineer went on, "I've brought the figures on the re-alignment. I'd appreciate it if you'd look them over, sir," he said, pulling a clipboard out from under his arm. "That's if the doctor thinks you're up to it."

Spock took the board. "I do not believe Dr. McCoy will have any objections."

"Aye, well, thank you, sir. I'll be letting you get some rest now." And with that Scotty left.

Later the same day Captain Kirk strolled into Sickbay. "Well, Bones, when do I get my First Officer back on the Bridge?"

"I'm not ready to discharge him yet, Jim. You'll have to wait a couple more days."

"What do you think, Spock? Can you take another two days under the scrutiny of Dr. McCoy?" teased Kirk as he took up a position next to the Vulcan.

"I have discovered from experience ~~when~~ it is best not to argue with the doctor's orders."

Kirk laughed, and McCoy looked astonished. "I never thought I'd live to hear that!" exclaimed Bones. "I think I'd better leave while I'm winning."

Kirk was pleased to have the chance to speak to his First Officer alone.

"Mr. Spock, I had a visit from ~~Sulu~~ ~~earlier~~ today. He wanted my advice on something."

"Indeed, Captain. I trust you were able to help him?"

Kirk smiled. "He's told me what happened on the planet. Apparently you became quite delirious, and said some things, names and places..."

"I see... I had suspected as much. Do you believe I should speak with him? I had avoided doing so earlier today believing I was sparing him some embarrassment."

"I think it might be in order."

"I will do so, Captain."

Kirk placed a friendly hand on Spock's arm. "Anyway, how are you feeling today?"

Christine Chapel was reluctant to disturb Mr. Spock, who seemed to be resting peacefully. However, Sulu was quite determined to speak with him.

"Very well, Mr. Sulu, I'll go and see if he's awake." She went to the Vulcan's side. His eyes were closed, and all readings on the ~~dic~~-panel indicated he was sleeping, so she was surprised to hear his voice.

"Nurse Chapel, please send in Mr. Sulu."

"How did you know...? Yes, Mr. Spock."

The young officer entered to find the Vulcan wide awake and looking better than he had seen him for a few days.

"Mr. Sulu, I wish to speak with you," began Spock, then waited as the young officer came to the bedside. "Although my memory of events on Morenia Alpha is incomplete, I do recall you disobeyed a direct order from a superior officer."

Sulu cringed. This was not what he had expected to hear from the Vulcan. He swallowed deeply, awaiting the worst.

"I intend to mention you in my report..."

"Mr. Spock, I must protest..."

"Please allow me to continue," asserted Spock. "If it had not been for your determined manner I would have died. For your actions above and beyond the call of duty, I intend to recommend you for a citation of loyalty."

What more fitting way was there for a Vulcan to express his thanks? Sulu had not expected this, and he was lost for words.

Spock continued, "It could not have been easy for you to accept me in my delirious condition."

"Mr. Spock, there was no way I could have left you no matter what your condition."

"Being Vulcan, I sometimes find it difficult to understand Human motives, but loyalty is something Vulcans value highly, and I shall not forget yours."

"Thank you, sir..." Sulu thought he saw Spock's face soften a little with a smile, but he could not be sure.

"I should tell you that Captain Kirk has informed me of your visit to him. He tells me that you seemed... concerned over some of the things I said while I was unconscious."

"Well, I... er... Yes, sir. I just wanted you to know that you needn't worry over me repeating anything."

"I believe I already knew that, Lieutenant."

Sulu could do nothing to stop a smile creasing his face.

"I think that is all, Mr. Sulu. I believe Nurse Chapel wishes me to sleep a little more."

"I understand, sir. I'm due on the Bridge soon, in any case."

Spock nodded his goodbye as the young officer left.

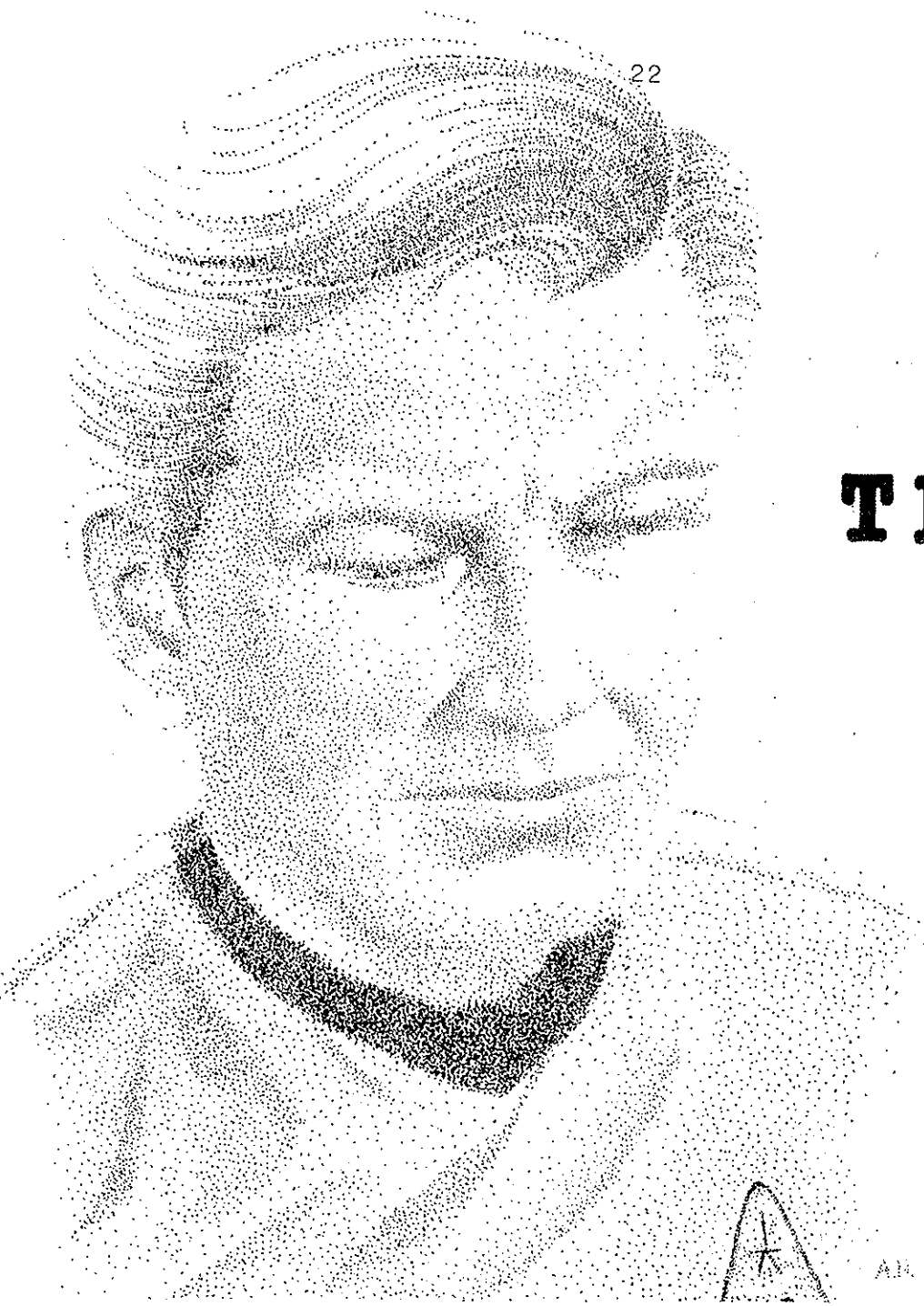
Sulu walked through the Enterprise corridors with a new-found spring to his step. A commendation for loyalty was the last thing he had expected to come out of a routine sample collection survey. The fact that he never did get to see his botanical paradise did not worry him in the slightest.

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Sulu says: Bird in hand makes it hard to blow nose.

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# TO TRUST AGAIN

by

BEVERLY KNAPP

Captain James T. Kirk picked up his dinner tray and headed towards his usual table, acutely aware of the sudden drop in the messroom chatter that had occurred when he entered the room. It had been several days since he had returned from the other universe. During his sojourn there he had seen an Enterprise running the way he would have liked his to run, with relaxed efficiency. He had been determined when he returned to initiate changes, but was finding it extremely difficult to do so without undermining discipline. He couldn't just dispense with formality the way that other Kirk had. The other Kirk's crew respected their Captain, his own crew did not. He had not yet been able to decide how to go about making the changes he wanted.

As he moved towards the table he noticed Spock and McCoy absorbed in animated discussion over their meal at a nearby table. He hesitated for a second, wondering if he should join them. Since he had returned they had been more relaxed with him on duty, and he had forced himself to respond despite his still almost paranoid distrust of everyone. Still he had not spent any off-duty time with them. The loneliness that he had known for so long urged him to go to them

\* (Inspired by 'Trust', by Sheila Clark, in Enterprise Incidents 2.)

now, he didn't want to be alone, but the fear of rejection was too strong. He couldn't take the chance of being rebuffed. True, Spock had helped him on his return from that other universe, but that was probably due only to his Vulcan devotion to duty. Despite the desire for friendship which had been reawakened by his short sojourn in the other universe, the fear of rebuff was too powerful for him to make the first step. He continued on towards the table that had been his original destination.

Spock noticed the Captain's arrival and also his momentary hesitation. He noticed the brief flash of longing and indecision in Kirk's eyes. With the sensitivity that the alternate Kirk had awakened in him, he sensed the desperate loneliness that surrounded his Captain. Abruptly he stood up and moved over to where Kirk was preparing to sit, leaving McCoy open-mouthed in astonishment.

"Sir," he began, searching for the right words.

"Yes, Mr. Spock, what is it?" Kirk's tone was formal and somewhat daunting.

Spock was already beginning to regret his impulse, but then he met Kirk's eyes and saw the hesitant flash of welcome in them. He knew then that his conclusion had been correct. The Captain had wanted to join them, but was unsure of his welcome.

"Dr. McCoy and I would be honored if you would share our table, sir." He caught the look of surprise in the Captain's eyes at his invitation.

Kirk was astonished. Despite Spock's less condemning and more supportive attitude on duty, he was sure the Vulcan was not truly eager for his company. They had nothing in common except their concern for the Enterprise. He would not force his company on someone who was just asking him out of duty... or pity. His voice was cold as he started to reply.

"Thank you for your invitation, Mr. Spock, but I would rather..." He broke off abruptly as he noticed a flash of something in Spock's eyes. Could it be disappointment? Did Spock actually want him to accept? The other Spock would have wanted his Kirk to accept. Perhaps...

Spock stood politely, waiting for the Captain to finish his sentence, wishing that he had not come.

Suddenly Kirk smiled somewhat hesitantly. "Mr. Spock, I would be pleased to accept your invitation. Thank you."

Spock relaxed fractionally. As they moved back to join McCoy he glanced sideways at the Captain, noting a lessening of tension in Kirk. He shot a look of warning at McCoy, who by now had recovered from his astonishment and had risen at their approach.

McCoy's first surprise had quickly changed to understanding. He, too, remembered their promise to the other Kirk. He noticed the uncertainty in Kirk's eyes as he and Spock approached. Somehow, it was easy to smile a welcome and say sincerely, "I'm glad you could join us, sir."

He was rewarded by a tentative smile from Kirk. "Thank you, gentlemen, for the invitation." Kirk's manner was still reserved and somewhat formal, but he was clearly trying to meet their advances halfway.

A somewhat awkward silence fell as each of the three men attempted to think of a topic of conversation. Having no idea about Kirk's interests, Spock found himself slightly at a loss as to how to proceed. The more he thought about it, the more he was sure the other Kirk had been right. Something had badly hurt his Captain, causing him to reject everyone. He couldn't forget the desperate loneliness in Kirk's voice when he had thought himself stranded between dimensions. But he wasn't sure how to go about building a friendship. He, himself, did not find it easy to make friends. McCoy was the only real friend he had.

The three men talked desultorily about ship's business, but there were many awkward pauses. Spock tried to think of some point of contact which might

help to break down the barriers of Kirk's mistrust. He knew the Captain would not believe Spock had developed a sudden desire for his company. There must be some logical way to ensure the Captain would not mistrust his motives in seeking Kirk out. Suddenly, a bit of information from Kirk's Starfleet Record came back to him. That could be it. Now, how to make the approach?

"Captain," he began hesitantly, breaking an uncomfortable silence.

"Yes, Mr. Spock?"

"You used to be on the chess team at the Academy, didn't you?"

"Why, yes. Where did you learn that?"

"I remember noticing it a while ago. I was wondering if you would care for a game. Dr. McCoy doesn't play at all, and most of the crew don't play up to my standard."

Kirk raised his eyes suddenly, a slightly wary look in them. His reaction was ambivalent, pleased that Spock should ask, yet at the same time somewhat suspicious of his motives.

"If you noticed it a while ago, why the sudden invitation?" he asked, a cold note back in his voice.

Inwardly Spock cringed slightly. It went against his Vulcan reserve to push for friendship. Only the memory of the terrible loneliness and desperation he had sensed in Kirk's mind during the meld made him persevere.

"I find that play with the computer is not as challenging as play against a live opponent, sir. Since I programmed it, I know all its tactics as it does mine." He paused, still looking at the Captain. Then, with sudden insight, he realized the best thing to do was to tell the whole truth, so he continued with some hesitation.

"Also, sir, I would like to become better acquainted with you. Since we both like chess, I thought this would be an appropriate way to begin."

"Why this sudden urge, Mr. Spock?" Kirk demanded, although he thought he knew the answer already.

"I think you know why, sir. The interuniverse transfer a few days ago is the cause, of course."

Kirk stared searchingly at his First Officer for a few seconds, then his eyes dropped. "I know," he almost whispered. Then the hazel eyes lifted once more and both Spock and McCoy could read the wistful, almost desperate plea in them.

"I..." He stopped speaking abruptly as a crewman passed near the table, suddenly realising that other crewmembers were within hearing distance. The Vulcan's voice had been pitched so low that no one else could have heard, but he didn't dare say any more. The moment passed.

"I would be pleased to play a game with you, Commander," he continued. "Would tomorrow evening at 2200 in Rec Room 4 be satisfactory?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Then I'll bid you goodnight, gentlemen," he said as he rose, "and thank you for the invitation to join you."

Spock and McCoy watched as the Captain left the room. On his exit the volume of chatter rose appreciably.

"Damn!" swore McCoy. "I thought you were getting through to him! Then he turns all cold and icy again."

"We were getting through," Spock replied. "But the mess hall is, quite rightly, not the place for confidences. Besides, it will take a long time to reteach him to trust. Remember what the other Kirk said. We must be patient and persevere."

"But can we be sure he wants to be friends with us?" McCoy questioned.

"Yes, Leonard," Spock replied softly and thoughtfully. "I'm sure."

\* \* \*

Kirk returned to his quarters, conscious of extremely ambivalent feelings. ~~It~~ had been pleasant to talk with someone for a change instead of to someone who listened politely with that formal mask of obviously false respect. But at the same time he was afraid of how close he had come to blurting out confidences.

Thank goodness that crewman had passed just then. It would not do for the crew to see their Captain anything but confident and self-assured, even if he could trust Spock and McCoy with any confidences. Certainly, the other Spock and McCoy had seemed to be people that could be trusted. And that McCoy had said that even in a universe based on treachery, Spock had been loyal to his Captain.

Perhaps he could trust Spock, at least... At least he would try. He would make an effort to respond, or anyway not to reject any overtures Spock made.

... But what if Spock tried to take advantage of him as Mitchell had done? Well, he'd be on his guard. If Spock or McCoy tried to take advantage of any relationship that might develop with him, he would know they weren't to be trusted either.

But, he was so lonely, he had to try to trust someone. Spock seemed the logical choice.

\* \* \*

The next evening Kirk entered the rec room at 2205. At his appearance the cheerful gabble abruptly ceased as crewmen gaped at him in astonishment. Their Captain never spent time in the rec room. Then eyes were carefully averted and a subdued murmur arose.

Kirk, disturbed by his reception, considered leaving again, but Spock, standing in an alcove by a chess board, had seen him enter. Kirk realized he couldn't back out now. He generally avoided the rec rooms because he knew his presence inhibited the crew - and besides, it was too painful.

Kirk moved quickly to the chess alcove where Spock waited.

"Captain Kirk." Spock greeted him respectfully with a meticulous salute.

They sat down and began to play. Spock had been concerned about the game. The more he considered it, the more uncertain he had become. He wondered what the Captain's reaction would be if he beat Kirk, as was likely. Kirk had not played for a long time, and Spock knew himself to be an exceptionally good player. Yet he knew that to allow Kirk to win, just because he was the Captain, would be to spoil any relationship before it had a chance to begin. He must be honest with Kirk at all times if he was to teach the Human to trust him. What would he do if the Captain played atrociously?!

Spock soon found his concern about Kirk's ability to be groundless. The Captain played extremely well, and Spock had to concentrate hard to win. At the end of the game, which had been played in almost total silence, Spock sat back and looked at his Captain with new respect.

"You play extremely well, sir. I admit I thought you would be more out of practise."

Kirk looked up from studying the board and trying to analyze where he had gone wrong.

"Thank you, Mr. Spock." Then he continued with a sudden, impulsive grin, "I must admit, I have on occasion played with the ship's computer, so I already know some of your tactics."

The Captain was now more relaxed than Spock had ever seen him.

"I see. Would you care for a rematch tomorrow night, sir?"

He was rewarded by another slight smile from Kirk. "Yes, I would, Mr. Spock, if you have nothing else planned."

"I have nothing planned for tomorrow night, sir. I would be honored to play another game with you."

"Then it's settled. Goodnight, Commander."

"Goodnight, sir."

Spock saluted correctly as Kirk left. He watched thoughtfully as his Captain exited the room. Yes, there were definite similarities between this Kirk and the other. The charm of that impulsive grin, for one. Spock realized suddenly that before the interuniverse transfer he had never seen his Captain smile.

Thoughtfully, he reset the board and returned to his quarters.

\* \* \*

By the end of two weeks a new routine was established. Several times a week Kirk and Spock would meet in Rec Room 4 for a chess game. Occasionally McCoy came over to watch the play.

Gradually, Kirk seemed to be relaxing in Spock's undemanding company. He found it easier than he had expected to dismiss any doubts as to Spock's motives, especially since Spock took no advantage of their growing acquaintance, remaining formal and never presuming while on duty.

Despite their growing relationship, Spock found it was still necessary for him to make all the advances. Kirk was as yet too unsure to make any himself. That he appreciated Spock's company, however, was obvious to the Vulcan.

One day, a couple of weeks after their first chess game, Spock turned with his tray of food, his eyes searching for an empty table. He noticed Kirk, absorbed in a report, sitting alone as usual. The Vulcan realized that although they had been meeting regularly for chess games, they had not spent any other time together except on duty. Without hesitation Spock presented himself at the Captain's table.

"Captain..." he began.

Kirk, who had not noticed his entrance, started, almost spilling his coffee. "Spock, don't do that!" he exclaimed.

He looked up in time to see the Vulcan coming rigidly to attention, obviously expecting a further reprimand, the cold, formal duty mask settling down over his face.

Realizing the interpretation Spock had put on his startled remark, Kirk found himself wanting to reassure the Vulcan. Impulsively, he smiled warmly at his First Officer, indicating a chair with a wave of his hand.

"Sorry, Mr. Spock. I'm afraid you startled me. Sit down. What can I do for you?"

The astounded Vulcan placed his tray on the table and sat. Kirk had never reacted so warmly to him before. He was surprised at the sudden glow of pleasure he felt at this token of growing friendship from a man he had almost despised only a few weeks ago.

"Nothing in particular, sir. I just thought it would be more pleasant to have company while eating."

Kirk's eyes met his briefly, then dropped. Could the Vulcan possibly realize how much he dreaded these lonely meals in the mess room? Kirk wondered. He would long since have stopped eating there, but at times he could no longer bear to be alone. Since his experience on the other Enterprise, he had found himself more often driven to where there were **other** people. The brief periods of companionship with Spock during the chess games only seemed to increase his need for Human contact.

Spock began eating, vainly searching for a topic of conversation. He still found himself somewhat at a loss for conversation, especially with the Captain. He had no real knowledge of what would interest Kirk, and he was not used to making small talk.

Spock looked up as two crewmen entered, laughing and talking animatedly. On sighting the Captain their conduct immediately became more sedate, a formal mask of constraint coming over their features. From the corner of his eye Spock noticed the Captain's eyes darken with a brief hint of pain.

"Sir, is there something wrong?" he asked, puzzled.

"Wha... No, Mr. Spock. Nothing is wrong."

Kirk resumed staring thoughtfully at the table. Spock became more and more convinced, watching him, that there was something bothering Kirk. But if the Human didn't want to confide in him he didn't see what he could do about it.

Kirk looked up, a decisive expression on his face. "Mr. Spock, if you have a few minutes when you are finished eating, I'd like to speak to you privately, perhaps in my quarters."

"Certainly, sir."

Spock finished eating quickly, intrigued by the unusual request. Together they left the cafeteria. As the doors closed behind them, a relieved babble of sound rose from the room they had left. Glancing at the Captain, Spock again saw the brief shadow in Kirk's eyes which he had noticed before.

Kirk led the way into his quarters, motioning for Spock to be seated. Then, seemingly ill at ease, he stood with his back to the Vulcan, idly fiddling with a carving of a sailing ship. Spock waited patiently. The Captain must have had some reason for asking him here.

At last Kirk turned back towards Spock and seated himself across the desk.

"Mr. Spock," he began abruptly, "I need your advice." Kirk looked down at the desk, searching for words. He was finding it even harder than he had expected to confide in someone. He found himself wishing he hadn't started this conversation, but it was too late to back out now.

Spock forcibly subdued his rising eyebrow. Kirk had never asked him for advice before - information, yes; advice, no.

"I would be honored to be of service, sir. What is the problem?"

Kirk looked up, noticing a hint of concern in his First Officer's voice. Somehow the glance reassured him of the Vulcan's sincerity. Still, he found it difficult to meet Spock's gaze. He looked back down at the table.

"It's... about the ship, Spock. The ship and the crew."

Spock was aware of a sense of... deflation? So it was only ship's business after all. He had thought that, perhaps, Kirk was going to confide in him... as a friend. Still, it was some progress anyway. Kirk never asked for advice, even on ship's business.

Kirk had paused for a moment, as if uncertain how to proceed. Then he started talking again with a rush.

"That other Enterprise, Spock. It was... different. There was a... feeling. There was an air of... sort of relaxed efficiency... and yet... the crew were perfectly respectful. I realized as soon as I saw it..." He paused and looked up. "I knew it was how I had always wanted my crew to act. I didn't know what had happened, but I wanted to keep it that way. Then... when I came back, I wanted... still want... to have that kind of spirit on this Enterprise, but... I'm having trouble. I don't know how to go about it. I can't just relax discipline, eliminate saluting, the way the other Kirk did. I know that. His crew liked and respected him. He could do it. My crew neither like nor respect me. I can't just change things. It would never work. Spock... what can I do?"

Spock was taken aback by the anguish in Kirk's eyes. He was also somewhat at a loss as to how to answer. The Captain was right in a way. Although the crew realized Kirk was a competent Captain, they didn't respect him as a person.

The pause stretched on. Kirk was starting to retreat again behind his formal reserve. Spock knew he had to say something before the Captain retreated back out of reach. Besides, he wanted to help. But what could he say?

"Captain..." he began.

Kirk's gaze snapped to his face with a faint expression of relief. Spock realized that Kirk had taken his silence as a rejection of his plea for help. It emphasised the vulnerability of their relationship. He couldn't fail Kirk now, or he would lose all chance to help the Human.

"Captain," he began again, "I can understand the difficulty. I'm not entirely certain myself the best way to make the changes you envision." He paused, a bit hesitant as to whether his next statement would be wise. Taking a deep breath he continued, "I'm not sure I'm the right person to advise you. Dr. McCoy would be much more qualified."

"No!" Kirk exclaimed. He was beginning to trust Spock, but he couldn't confide in McCoy.

Spock correctly interpreted his Captain's reaction. Kirk was not yet ready to trust anyone else, even McCoy. He had to try to help himself, or possibly lose his last opportunity to reach Kirk.

"Very well, sir. I will try to help." Spock paused, ordering his thoughts. "You are right in believing you can't make sudden changes, but perhaps gradual changes could be managed."

"What do you mean, Mr. Spock?"

Spock was uncertain how Kirk would take his suggestion, but it had to be said.

"Sir, I believe the crew consider you to be a good Captain, but they feel you do not trust them to do their jobs properly without close supervision. Perhaps a good way to start would be to indicate in some fashion that you know they will perform well. After all, they can hardly be relaxed if they feel you do not trust them."

"But how?"

"Sir, each person has to discover that for himself. Think back. I'm sure you can remember commanding officers you admired, and why you admired them. Remember how they indicated confidence in your ability. Then adapt it to yourself."

Kirk looked back at Spock, uncertainty clear in his eyes. "That's not very exact advice," he complained.

"I'm sorry, sir. I am not the right person to advise you, as I said before. Dr. McCoy is much more conversant with Human behaviour patterns. But Captain - I believe you have the ability and insight necessary to succeed in this. I will certainly help you as much as I can. But, **sir, it would be much easier** if you could bring yourself to trust me."

Kirk scrutinized the Vulcan intently, gradually becoming convinced of his First Officer's sincerity. He smiled tentatively. "Thank you, Mr. Spock. I shall try. Do you have any other suggestions?"

"Not at the moment, sir."

"Very well, you may go. I believe you are on duty shortly?"

"Yes, sir. In half an hour."

"Then I won't keep you any longer."



Spock saluted correctly and turned to go, only to be halted by the Captain's voice.

"Mr. Spock," Kirk's tone was grave, but not formal, "thank you."

"You are welcome, Captain."

During the next few weeks it was obvious to Spock that Kirk was attempting to follow his advice. The Captain, while not relaxing discipline, had been making an effort to notice and compliment work well done. He had also been leaving the crew more on their own without constant checking and fault-finding.

And it was having an effect. The crew members, while still working efficiently, were less tense, especially in the Captain's presence. Actually, efficiency had even improved slightly.

There had been other changes too, Spock reflected as he noticed Kirk enter the cafeteria. There were no longer the abrupt cessations of conversation when the Captain entered a room. The crew were becoming accustomed to his presence in the rec room and cafeteria, and no longer felt they must curtail their enjoyment because of it.

Kirk picked up his tray and glanced around the room. Sighting Spock and McCoy eating at a corner table, he headed for them, a hint of eagerness in his manner. That was another change, Spock realized. Kirk was now making the occasional advance towards them. Although there were periods when Kirk seemed to withdraw to arm's length again for a while, they did not last long. In general, the Captain was more relaxed, and seemed happier every day.

Kirk reached the table. "May I join you, gentlemen?"

"Certainly, sir," McCoy replied with a warm smile.

"Of course, Captain."

The three men were soon deep in conversation.

After the Captain left for his tour of duty on the Bridge, Spock and McCoy walked to McCoy's office.

"I guess the other Kirk was right after all, Spock," McCoy ventured. "The Captain certainly seems willing to meet us halfway. He's changed a lot."

"Indeed, Leonard, but is it enough?"

"What do you mean?"

"Captain Kirk is starting to trust us, true. However, there has been no particular occasion for him not to trust us. How will he react in a dangerous situation? Will he continue to trust us, or revert back?"

"I don't know, Spock. I hope he'll continue to trust us, but it's not certain. You know, Spock, since he's started to relax with us, I find myself developing a definite liking for him. When he's not being so stand-offish he is extremely likeable."

"I know, Leonard, I know."

"Captain's Log, Stardate 4023.1

The Enterprise is orbiting a newly discovered Class M planet. A survey party headed by Commander Spock has beamed down to the surface. Some influence is disrupting the ship's sensors so we cannot tell whether there is intelligent life. Mr. Spock has assured me the sensor disturbance is due to traces of certain minerals on the planet. It is not artificial."

Kirk snapped off the recorder. He was feeling distinctly uneasy, although he could give no reason. The assignment should be routine. He consciously relaxed his grip on the arms of the chair. Why was he so apprehensive? He rose

restlessly and moved over to the science station, where Chekov had taken over.

"Mr. Chekov, how complete is the sensor disturbance?" he inquired.

Chekov stood to attention with a respectful salute. "It seems to be variable, sir. At times it is nearly complete, at others we can receive vague life form readings."

"What about the landing party? Can the sensors pick them up?"

"The sensors only pick them up part of the time, sir. The readings keep fading in and out. Commander Spock's readings are the hardest to pick up, sir."

"Thank you, Mr. Chekov."

Kirk turned away and walked back to the command chair. He was still too tense to sit down, however.

"Captain Kirk," Uhura called, interrupting his train of thought.

"Yes, Lieutenant, what is it?"

"Emergency call from the planet, sir. Mr. Spock has been captured and carried off by a band of natives."

"Is the rest of the party under attack?"

"No, sir."

"Notify the transporter room to beam up the rest of the landing party. I want them in the briefing room in 5 minutes along with Security Chief Johnston and Dr. McCoy. Have a security team stand by in the transporter room for rescue duty. Mr. Chekov, try to locate Mr. Spock on the sensors. Mr. Sulu, you have the con. Mr. Scott, come with me." The flurry of orders was given quickly as Kirk headed for the turbolift.

Somehow the lift seemed slower than usual, although Kirk knew it was probably only his own impatience that caused the impression. He was conscious of an unfamiliar feeling of fear. What if Spock were killed before he could be rescued? Kirk was astonished at the strength of these fears. He was always concerned when a member of his crew was in danger, but it was nothing like this.

His thoughts were cut short by the opening of the door.

The landing party arrived well within the five minutes. The party of seven looked somewhat bewildered at the speed with which things had happened.

"Lieutenant Ludlow, report!" Kirk snapped at the second ranking member of the landing party.

"Yes, sir." The young officer came even more rigidly to attention. "We had not noticed any natives in the vicinity, sir. The tricorders are more reliable on the surface, but still don't always pick up life forms. Mr. Spock was working a short distance away from the main group, near a cave in the hill. I had just happened to look that way - I wanted him to verify a reading - when a group of natives, ten or so, jumped him. He managed to dispose of one, but another one hit him over the head with a club. I called the security guards and started towards Mr. Spock. They were too far away for us to use phasers. The natives looked as though they would attack me, too, until they saw the two security men coming. Then they retreated back into the cave, taking Mr. Spock and the unconscious native with them. We tried to follow, but it was too dark in the cave, which turned out to be a tunnel. So we called for assistance. We found Mr. Spock's communicator where he'd been attacked."

As the scientist finished his report, one of the other members of the landing party drew in her breath as though to add something, then apparently lost her nerve.

Kirk noticed her impulse, asked, "What is it, Yeoman Prince?"

The girl flushed, then saluted nervously. "It's just that while the others were in the tunnel, I and two of the men stayed outside. I saw some of the natives, sir. I was a short distance away from the other two, and a group of the natives attempted to catch me. I looked up and noticed them before they could get too close, and I ran back to the others. The natives stopped as soon as the three of us were together, although there were about ten of them. I think they're afraid to attack groups of people, sir."

"Mr. Ludlow, what is your opinion of this observation?" Kirk asked the astonished young lieutenant.

"It would seem plausible, sir. They were ready enough to attack me alone, but ran when the guard arrived, even though they still outnumbered us, sir."

"Very well, you may go. I want a written report as soon as possible."

"Yes, sir!"

The landing party left as Kirk called the Bridge. "Mr. Sulu, has Mr. Spock been located yet?"

"No, sir. The sensor interference is making it extremely difficult. We may not be able to pick him up at all on the sensors, sir."

Kirk cut the connection. "It looks as though we'll have to do this the hard way. However, I don't want to lose any more men the same way."

McCoy's eyes flashed angrily at Kirk's cold tone, but he kept silent. The Captain didn't encourage argument.

"Mr. Scott, the sensors can't pick up life form readings down there and communicators, as Mr. Spock demonstrated, are too easy to lose. Could the ship's sensors pick up one of the transponders? If anyone else gets captured I want to be sure we can find him."

"No, sir. The interference is too great for their power source to overcome."

Kirk leaned back dejectedly.

Suddenly Scotty's eyes lit up. "But the translator-transponders would work, sir. They give out a much more powerful signal."

"Very well. How many of them are available?"

"We only have 16. They're not used very often."

"Dr. McCoy, I want one of the translators implanted in each of the rescue party. Mr. Johnston, have a security guard of 15 waiting in the transporter room for Dr. McCoy."

"Fifteen, sir?"

"Yes, Mr. Johnston. I'm going to lead the party myself." Kirk felt a brief flash of amusement at the others' astonished expressions as he made his statement. However, the amusement was quickly superseded by pain as he was forced to realize again how little his men respected him.

However, as he left for the transporter room, he realized that McCoy's expression had held not only surprise, but relief. He was somewhat at a loss to understand it. For that matter, he didn't really understand himself. It was certainly not necessary for him to go down himself. The security party knew its job. There was no need for the Captain to risk his life.

Still, it shouldn't be dangerous if he stayed with the group. After all, the security guard would hardly betray him. It would go hard with a Security Chief who lost his Captain.

Despite his common sense, however, he was still uneasy. Then why was he going? He really wasn't sure. He only knew he couldn't stay safely on the ship, waiting for reports. He had to be doing something.

The wait for McCoy seemed interminable. At last the doctor and an assistant

appeared with the translator-transponders. The doctor implanted several of the devices, then approached Kirk.

"Due to the translator function, this has to be implanted under the skin against the skull just behind the ear, sir."

"Go ahead."

McCoy quickly placed the small device, then stepped back. He hesitated a moment, took a deep breath, then released it. Kirk looked at him puzzledly.

"Doctor McCoy, is there something you wish to say?" The tone was cold and formal, more like Kirk before his introduction to the other universe than the man who had been gradually accepting their offers of friendship.

McCoy almost backed down. But then, gathering his courage, he managed to get out what was on his mind.

"Captain... sir, I'd... like to go with the search party." Kirk's expression grew even colder, and McCoy hurried on. "Commander Spock may be hurt and need attention. Besides, sir, he is my friend, too."

Kirk stared into McCoy's pleading eyes, astonished at the feeling of... warmth? induced by the use of the word 'too'. He reconsidered his initial impulse to refuse. After all, the doctor was right. Spock might need medical attention.

"Request granted, Doctor. Mr. Moritz, you will not be needed. Doctor McCoy will be going down instead."

As soon as everyone was equipped with the translator-transponders, the party beamed down to the mouth of the cave. To the astonishment of everyone, the Captain took the lead as they entered the dark tunnel. Their lights reflected back from occasional chips of greenish crystal embedded in the rock walls. As they penetrated deeper into the mountain, the floor began to dip gradually. The party proceeded for about a kilometer before coming to a branching of the tunnel.

Kirk halted, then turned to the Security Chief. "We'll have to split up. You take half the men, the other half will go with me. If you reach another branch, split up again, but don't get down to less than four in a group. If you come to any more branches after that, decide on the most likely and follow it. And be careful - I don't want anyone getting separated from their group. The last thing we need is another man captured. Watch out for ambushes, too. After all we don't know the natives won't attack a group, we only assume it. If you locate Commander Spock, inform the ship. They'll inform the other groups. Understood?"

After the chorus of 'Yes, sirs' Kirk motioned to the right hand tunnel.

"We'll go this way; Mr. Johnston, take the other branch. Doctor McCoy, come with me."

The parties separated. As their group penetrated on, the tunnel got rougher and rougher. Kirk kept a brisk pace, although still moving cautiously enough to guard against ambush.

McCoy was finding it somewhat difficult to keep close to the Captain. At the same time, he was extremely pleased. Kirk had obviously come to think of Spock as a friend. It was evident in his tenseness and impatience when rough going forced them to slow down. Even more it was obvious in Kirk's decision to beam down himself with the search party, something he had never done before, even though this wasn't the first time Spock had been in danger.

Always before the Captain had gone strictly by the book when anyone was missing, staying on the Bridge and coordinating the search. True, it was more logical, but McCoy knew the crew interpreted it as a lack of concern for their safety on the Captain's part.

During the past weeks McCoy had gradually come to suspect it wasn't lack of concern, but lack of trust that had influenced the Captain. Occasional remarks

when Kirk's barriers had let down a little, and other indications, pointed to that conclusion. Or was it, perhaps, an increased sensitivity engendered by the alternate Kirk that made him recognize it now? Despite his anxiety about Spock, McCoy couldn't help but be encouraged by Kirk's obvious worry about the Vulcan.

McCoy's thoughts were interrupted by an ominous rumble. Glancing up he noticed widening cracks in the ceiling. He leapt forward, attempting to get away from the unstable area. The last thing he remembered was a blow on his head.

He awoke to someone calling his name. It was the Captain, but there was an unfamiliar note of... concern? in his voice.

"Doctor McCoy, wake up!"

"Yes, sir, I'm awake." McCoy tried to sit up only to be stopped by firm hands.

"Don't move, Doctor. I think you have a broken leg."

"Plast! What happened, sir?"

"A cave-in of some sort. It may have been an accident, or possibly it was planned."

"What about the others?" McCoy struggled to sit up again.

"Ensign Walters is still unconscious. Lieutenant Marenga seems to have several broken ribs. The rest of the party must be on the other side of the rocks. They were some distance behind."

"What about you, sir?"

"I'm all right. A slight cut on the arm is all. I was furthest ahead and so farthest from the fall. I'm just about to contact the ship again. I want to see about getting you and the others beamed up."

"What about Spock?"

"I don't know. Somehow, we'll have to continue the search. Once I contact the Enterprise again I'll know what can be done."

"Yes, sir."

Kirk reached for his communicator. "Kirk to Enterprise."

"Enterprise, Scott here, sir."

"What is the status of the other parties, Mr. Scott?"

"The rest of your party is uninjured, sir, except for a few minor scrapes and bruises. They estimate it will take several hours to remove the fallen rock. It has to be done carefully to prevent further cave-ins. The other group just reported that their tunnel is a dead end. The sensors haven't located Mr. Spock yet, sir."

"I see. Dr. McCoy and the two guards are injured and can't go on. Can you beam the rest of the group in here using my communicator as a beacon?"

"No, sir. I'm afraid not. The interference is too strong. I can get a good enough fix to beam you out one at a time, but not a good enough one to try beaming anyone in. It's too risky."

"Have a med team standing by in the transporter room, Mr. Scott. Also have the guards start clearing the rockfall."

"Yes, sir."

Kirk lowered his communicator slowly.

"Sir, we can't just abandon Spock!"

"We're not going to, Doctor. As soon as the fall is cleared the search will continue."

"But Captain, that could be too late."

"That's enough, Doctor McCoy!" Kirk snapped. "I make the decisions around here."

Kirk's eyes blazed angrily, but it wasn't the anger that caused McCoy to subside, but something else... a look, almost as though the Captain were fighting a battle with himself.

As McCoy's protests subsided Kirk returned to the inner debate that had begun when he first realized it might not be possible to get guards into this part of the tunnel. The sensible, and safe, thing was to return to the Enterprise, wait until the tunnel was cleared and start the search again.

But what if McCoy was right? It was possible that Spock was in a situation where every moment counted. The sensors weren't being any help, and the delay of several hours could mean Spock's death.

The only other alternative was to go on by himself. He was the only one on this side of the fall who was fit to go on. The other group could follow when they got through the obstacle.

But... did he dare? What if they left him, as Mitchell had? After all, no one on the ship liked him. Of course, Spock was well respected. They certainly wouldn't leave until he found and rescued Spock. Maybe it wouldn't be such a risk.

But what if the sensors found Spock first? Would they then go off and leave him? All his fears and doubts were returning. Could he trust them? Of course, there was Spock. Surely Spock wouldn't let them leave without him - or would he? He could trust the Vulcan, couldn't he?

But what if Spock was in no shape to give orders? What then? Kirk felt the decision was tearing him apart. On the one hand, he couldn't desert Spock; on the other, the thought of being alone down here was reviving the pathological mistrust he'd felt of everyone, ever since Dimoris.

McCoy was watching the silent struggle with baited breath. He didn't know exactly what was happening, but he did know it was a crisis point for Kirk.

Kirk continued the debate with himself, trying to overcome his irrational fears. At last two thoughts tipped the scales. One was the realization that if he wanted the respect of his crew, he must earn it. The other, and most powerful, was the memory of his relief when Spock had come to help him when he'd thought himself trapped between dimensions. He had a fair idea of the risk the Vulcan had taken. Could he do less for Spock? He realized he'd come to value the Vulcan's companionship more than he'd known. But friendship had to be earned. He couldn't let Spock down. His decision made, Kirk raised his communicator again.

"Mr. Scott. Prepare to beam Dr. McCoy and the other two casualties aboard."

"Yes, sir. I'll have to do it one at a time, though. There's too much interference to lock on to more than one signal at a time. What about yourself, sir?"

"I will not be beaming up. I'm going to continue the search for Commander Spock."

"I beg your pardon, sir?"

"You heard me, Mr. Scott. I'm staying down here." There was a brief pause as Kirk struggled again with his fear. "Keep scanning for Mr. Spock. If you find him beam him up and then beam me aboard. Otherwise I'll signal if I find him. As soon as the rockfall is cleared, the search party is to follow me."

"But, sir, what if you get captured too?"

"Hopefully, in that case, they'll take me to Spock. Keep a close check on my signal."

"Yes, sir!" There was a new respect in Scott's voice which warmed Kirk.

"Captain, let me look at your arm. If you're going on it should be taken care of," McCoy said, trying not to let his relief show. He realized this was a move the old Kirk could never have made. He reached for the Captain's left arm with one hand and the medikit with the other.

"It's nothing, Doctor. You'd do better to prepare to beam up."

McCoy ignored him, attending instead to the arm. "Captain, that's no minor cut. It really should be seen to in Sickbay. It needs to be sealed and disinfected. There seem to be fragments of rock in the wound."

"I can't, Doctor. You heard Mr. Scott. Once I beam up there's no way to get back down here. It's not that bad. Just do the best you can."

"All right, sir, but it's taking a chance."

Kirk found the concern in McCoy's voice ridiculously comforting. The first of the security guards shimmered in the transporter effect and disappeared, followed shortly by the second guard.

"Doctor, are you ready to beam up?" Scott's voice came over the communicator.

"Yes, Scotty." McCoy looked back at Kirk. "Good luck, sir. Be careful - we don't want to lose you too."

Kirk smiled faintly. "Thank you, Doctor."

The transporter effect engulfed McCoy and Kirk was left alone.

Kirk turned, flashing the beam of his hand lamp down the tunnel. He started off, moving cautiously, alert for possible ambush. The tunnel wound gradually into the hill. Occasionally small branches forked out but Kirk kept to the main tunnel. Every half hour he reported in to the ship, only to be told there was still no trace of Spock.

After approximately two hours of steady travel Kirk was beginning to get discouraged. There was still no sign that the natives had come this way, and his arm was getting steadily more painful. Kirk halted and pulled out his communicator to check with the ship again. As he did so he heard a faint murmur, almost like voices. It came from ahead. Lifting his communicator to his mouth Kirk called the Enterprise.

"Scott here, sir."

"Mr. Scott, I may be nearing the natives. Have Mr. Chekov scan the area ahead of me with special care."

"Yes, sir."

"Kirk out." He flicked the communicator shut and continued cautiously down the tunnel, dimming his hand lamp to the minimum light necessary to proceed.

After several more turns he noticed an appreciable increase in the light. Also, the sound that had drawn him was now clearer. It sounded like some kind of chant. He snapped off the lamp. Ahead of him he could see flickering light from around the next turn. He approached slowly, reconnoitering carefully as he reached the corner.

Ahead was a short stretch of tunnel widening into a large cavern. Kirk moved cautiously to the entrance, looking carefully around. Towards one end of the cavern stood a huge statue formed from a crystal similar to those which glinted in the tunnel walls. A fire crackled and flickered in front of it, giving off odorous vapors, its smoke obscuring the form of the statue, and also partially obscuring the forms of the natives.

Kirk shifted his attention from the statue to the walls of the cavern. They were pockmarked with the entrances of other tunnels or caves. Almost directly across from him was a lighted cavern. Kirk noticed a movement, a flash of blue.



Could it be Spock? The natives seemed to wear mainly brownish furs and skins.

Kirk moved to his right, away from the statue and the natives, making his way round the edge of the cavern, heading for that flash of blue. He glanced into each opening as he passed to be sure Spock wasn't there.

Reaching the entrance to the lighted chamber, he checked first to be sure the natives were still around the statue. Then he carefully looked into the cave.

A wave of relief swept over him as he saw Spock. The Vulcan was fastened between two stalagmites rising from the floor of the cavern, his back to the entrance. After making sure there were no guards around, Kirk swiftly entered the chamber, circling so as to face the Vulcan.

"Spock, are you all right?" he asked quietly, his relief showing in his eyes.

"Yes, Captain," came the calm reply. "However, I have been unable to free myself."

Kirk moved quickly to a pillar and began working to loosen the knot. "You know, Mr. Spock..." Kirk sent a mischievous glance towards the Vulcan, "You've put us to a lot of trouble. The least you could have done was to hold on to your communicator so we could locate you."

Spock, taken aback by the unaccustomed teasing note in his Captain's voice, found himself somewhat at a loss for a reply. Finally - "I shall endeavor to keep that in mind, sir, if the circumstance ever arises again."

"I'd prefer you to prevent the circumstance from arising, Mr. Spock," Kirk stated, suddenly serious again. "I was worried about you."

For once the Captain's expression was open, and the Vulcan was amazed and warmed by the depth of concern he could see in them.

At last the knot gave, releasing one arm. Kirk moved immediately to the other pillar, while Spock concentrated on getting the circulation moving properly again in his right arm. The second knot was easier, and Spock was soon free. His eyes surveyed the cavern.

"Sir, where is the rest of the rescue party?" he inquired.

"There is no 'rest of the party', Mr. Spock. I'm afraid I'm it," replied Kirk with a slight smile. Then he continued, "The rest of the party got stuck on the wrong side of a rock fall. I was the only one on this side fit enough to come after you. I think the others are a couple of hours behind me."

Spock suppressed a look of astonishment with difficulty. He had been gratified that the Captain had come along with the search party. He had never expected that Kirk would come alone.

Kirk reached for his communicator and called the ship. "Mr. Scott, I have located Commander Spock. Is it still impossible to lock on to two people at once?"

"Yes, sir. The interference is too great as long as you're underground."

"On my command you will lock on to the communicator signal and beam Mr. Spock aboard. Then lock on to my translator signal and beam me up. Also recall the search parties."

"Yes, sir."

"Sir, as Captain you should beam up first," Spock protested.

Kirk turned to him. "No, Mr. Spock, something might go wrong. If you lost the communicator there's no way we could lock on to you. I have a translator-transponder so they can lock on to me anytime. You'll go first."

Reluctantly Spock recognized the validity of Kirk's argument. "Yes, sir."

Spock took the proffered communicator, flipping up the grid. The Captain

was looking at him with an expression he found difficult to interpret.

"See you on board, Mr. Spock. Mr. Scott, energize." Kirk stepped back out of range.

Spock felt the beginning of the transporter effect. Looking over Kirk's shoulder he was horrified to notice a group of natives coming up behind the Captain, clubs in their hands. The scene faded, to be replaced by the transporter room.

As soon as the temporary transporter paralysis faded Spock was moving to the console. "Beam the Captain up immediately, Mr. Scott."

"It will take a few seconds to lock on, sir. There is a lot of interference."

"As quickly as possible, Mr. Scott. The Captain is in trouble."

"I'm trying to, sir, but he's moving. It's almost impossible to get a fix on him."

Scott worked for a short while longer at the controls. Just as Spock was about to come to help, Scott stiffened. "Mr. Spock, Captain Kirk's signal has just disappeared."

Spock moved rapidly to the console. After a brief check he moved to the intercom. "Spock to Bridge. Mr. Chekov, are you picking up the Captain's signal?"

"No, sir. It disappeared a few seconds ago."

"Try to locate it again, Mr. Chekov."

"Aye, sir."

On the Bridge Chekov shrugged and looked at Sulu. "I don't know what good this will do. If the signal's gone it must mean the Captain is dead."

Spock turned back to the console as the transporter room doors swished open to admit Dr. M'Benga.

"Mr. Spock, let me have a look at you."

"That will not be necessary, Doctor. There is nothing wrong with me."

"I'm afraid I have to disagree, sir. Even from here I can see a large bump on your forehead, as well as blood on your wrists. I must ask you to come with me to Sickbay for an exam."

"There is no need. The injuries are minor."

"Maybe so, but Dr. McCoy told me to bring you down, orders of the CMO. He couldn't come himself because of his leg."

"His leg?"

"Yes, didn't you know? He has a cracked femur due to a rock fall on the planet."

Spock looked at M'Benga calculatingly. Realizing from the doctor's expression that he couldn't get out of this exam, he resigned himself to the inevitable. Besides, it would give him time to think. He was finding it hard to understand his reaction to the loss of the Captain.

"Very well." He turned to Scott. "Mr. Scott, you will run a complete check on the ship's sensors, both here and on the Bridge. I want to be sure the loss of the Captain's signal is not due to sensor malfunction. Report to me in Sickbay as soon as you complete the tests."

"Yes, sir."

Spock followed M'Benga to Sickbay, where he was greeted enthusiastically by McCoy.

"So the Captain found you, Spock." His eyes and beaming smile revealed his

relief. However, knowing the Vulcan's distaste for emotional scenes, he restrained himself from further comment. Besides, something was bothering him. Suddenly he realized what it was.

"Where's the Captain, Spock? He needs to have that arm seen to as soon as possible."

The Vulcan hesitated briefly. "We lost the Captain's signal just after I was beamed aboard, Doctor."

McCoy was stunned. When he recovered his voice he demanded, "What are you doing to find him, Spock?"

"There is little I can do at the moment, Doctor. Mr. Scott is checking to see if the loss is due to malfunction on the ship."

McCoy opened his mouth to comment, then thought better of it as he noticed the closed, shuttered look on the Vulcan's face. He had never seen Spock so completely expressionless, but he did know that usually the Vulcan was most expressionless when most disturbed.

Spock, on his part, remained completely silent, seeming preoccupied.

McCoy was too busy trying to decipher his own reactions, however, to worry much about Spock's. He couldn't forget Kirk's faint smile as he had said goodbye, or the concern in the Captain's voice when he had regained consciousness. He could tell from Spock's reaction that the possibility of the Captain being alive must be slim, and he was astonished at the strength of his own feelings of sorrow and loss. A few months ago he would have regretted the loss of the ship's Captain, but he certainly wouldn't have felt this sensation of personal bereavement. He was jerked from his reverie by Scotty's entrance.

M'Benga was just finishing with Spock. "You seem to have escaped any serious injury, Mr. Spock. You are definitely fit for duty."

"Thank you, Doctor. Mr. Scott, your report, please."

"There's nothing wrong with the ship's sensors, Mr. Spock. Captain Kirk must be dead."

Spock looked at him calmly. "Have the search parties returned to the ship, Mr. Scott?"

"Yes, sir. Everyone is aboard."

Spock's eyes flashed briefly. "No, Mr. Scott. Everyone is not aboard. The Captain is not aboard."

Scott looked somewhat startled. "But sir, Captain Kirk must be dead. It's the only possible explanation."

The Vulcan made no direct reply to the outburst. "Mr. Scott, you will have another search party equipped with the translator-transponders. I will lead it myself. They are to be ready in 10 minutes."

"It's not reasonable, Mr. Spock! There's no use trying to rescue a dead man! Leonard, try to talk some sense into him. You know about that type of device. There are only two reasons it would quit - if it's destroyed, or if its power source is removed. Since its power source is the electrical activity of the brain, the only way to remove the power source is to kill the wearer, unless it is removed surgically, and there wasn't anywhere near enough time for that. As for destroying the device, any blow powerful enough to destroy it would also crush the skull. Any way you look at it, Captain Kirk must be dead!"

During the entire tirade Spock remained motionless. "Mr. Scott, you will prepare the search party immediately." The Vulcan's voice was colder than they had ever heard it. "We will not leave this planet until either the Captain or his body is on board."

"Aye, sir." Scott left, still upset over what he viewed as the Vulcan's

irrationality, but realizing now was not the time to argue. Spock and McCoy were left alone.

"He's right you know, Spock. The Captain must be dead," McCoy said slowly. "It's a shame this had to happen now, just when he was overcoming his mistrust. I wouldn't have thought it a few months ago, but I'm going to miss him. It took a lot of courage to go after you alone. Our attempt to get him to think of us as friends was obviously successful. I wish he hadn't been lost. But Spock... it just isn't logical to risk more men to recover the body of someone who's already dead. You should be the first to realize that!"

"You may be right, Doctor. However, there is a chance, even though infinitesimally small, that the Captain is alive. I would be failing in my duty to Starfleet if I did not attempt to make certain of Captain Kirk's fate." The words were cold and formal, but McCoy was not deceived.

"That's not the only reason, is it, Spock? Only a short time ago you wouldn't have considered this necessary. You know Starfleet will accept Scotty's evaluation. The real truth is you can't bear to leave him."

Spock glanced briefly at McCoy and then away. "Leonard," he began with some difficulty, "the Captain sent me up first. That was an act of trust, as was his coming after me himself. I cannot betray that trust. If he is alive, it is unlikely that he knows we lost his signal. He's obviously been betrayed in the past. If that's the case, what will he be thinking now?"

McCoy stared at the Vulcan, horrified. "He'll believe our offers of friendship were only a ploy, to get him to trust us so we could desert and betray him."

"Indeed. I am not willing to take that chance."

"You're right, Spock, we can't take that chance. I wish I could come with you. Good luck."

"Luck, Doctor, is still not logical."

"I know, Spock," he smiled, "but good luck anyway."

The Vulcan turned and left silently. McCoy gazed at the closing door. Spock was right. The only way they could live with themselves was to recover Kirk's body, to be sure there was no chance that he would die believing he had been betrayed again. The mere suggestion left McCoy shuddering. Kirk had been hurt enough in the past. They could not let him be hurt that way again.

The first thing Kirk became aware of was the sickly sweet smell of incense, the second, a headache that began at the base of his skull and spread throughout his head. An attempt to move demonstrated that his hands were tied over his head and his feet were also fastened. Startled, he opened his eyes. Above him loomed the green crystal statue, half obscured by smoke. He seemed to be fastened to a long flat oblong of stone, probably an altar of some kind.

A prolonged, determined attempt to free himself only resulted in increasing his headache and chafing his wrists. Obviously he could not escape unaided. Why hadn't he been beamed aboard? He could tell the transponder was still intact.

A familiar feeling of bitterness filled him. With a sinking feeling he realized he must have been betrayed again. The Enterprise crew must have abandoned him, even Spock. The Vulcan must just have been using him, tricking him with a pretence of friendship, just like Mitchell.

Kirk was astonished at the pain and despair this realization evoked. He felt himself falling back into the black abyss of loneliness from which Spock's companionship had temporarily rescued him.

Closing his eyes, Kirk allowed the misery caused by this final betrayal to sweep over him. At least, he thought, it wouldn't be for long. It was likely

he had been tied here as some type of sacrifice. Perhaps it was just as well. Even if by some miracle he escaped he couldn't bear the loneliness and mistrust much longer, yet he knew he would be unable to trust again. Despair overwhelmed him.

Gradually, as time passed, Kirk became calmer and another thought occurred to him. Perhaps Spock had been more seriously injured than he thought. Perhaps the Vulcan had collapsed and was not in command. Maybe he didn't even know Kirk had been left behind.

//Not likely,// commented one part of his mind.

//But it is possible,// objected another part.

The friendship he had felt for Spock and the trust he had thought destroyed began to revive. There might even be other reasons; sensor malfunction for example, or a Klingon attack. Maybe he could still trust the Vulcan, at least. If Spock was unfit for duty he couldn't prevent Scott from ordering the Enterprise to leave.

Still... Spock had looked all right, but he did have a head wound. Kirk wanted to continue to trust Spock, but doubts insisted on intruding; logical, hurtful doubts - very persuasive doubts. Still some small stubborn part of him insisted the Vulcan was to be trusted.

Eventually, exhausted by his emotional conflict and weakened by his wound, he dozed off.

Spock ordered half of the search party to beam down to the original cave and start their search from there. He and the other half beamed down on the other side of the hill. The Vulcan had deduced an entry on that side from the actions of his captors. Since the cavern was closer to the other side of the hill, logically that path should be shorter and quicker if they could find it.

Carefully scanning with a specially augmented tricorder, Spock at last located an opening into the mountain. The party proceeded cautiously along the tunnel, Spock sternly suppressing an illogical need to hurry. The most pressing need at the moment was for stealth. They needed to get to Kirk without being seen.

//If he is alive, that is,// the logical, Vulcan portion of his mind insisted.

As they travelled along the path, Spock watched the tricorder, hoping to pick up Kirk's transponder signal, without any luck. He did notice, however, that there was something interfering with the tricorder's effectiveness. Eventually he traced the effect to the greenish crystals in the walls. Doubtless they were also the reason for the difficulty in transporter operations.

There was still no trace of Kirk, alive or dead.

They had travelled about two miles when Spock's Vulcan hearing picked up a quiet murmur of voices around the next bend. Cautiously, he moved forward, motioning the security men to stay back. As he looked carefully around the corner he realized they had reached the cavern.

He looked searchingly around the huge cave. The only figures visible were two natives standing in the vicinity of the large greenish statue at the end of the cave, almost obscured by smoke arising from several braziers. The material of the statue looked familiar. It seemed to be of the same crystal that was imbedded in the walls.

Spock felt a sudden flash of hope. Perhaps Kirk really was still alive! He knew now that despite his arguments to McCoy, he had not really believed there was a chance the Captain had survived. However, judging from the effect the crystal had on the tricorder a piece of it as large as that statue could well have overwhelmed the translator-transponder signal. If Kirk were alive he must be by the statue.

The Vulcan returned to the rest of his party. "I believe I may have located the Captain. Stay here. If any other natives come into the cavern, try to stun them without letting them see you. I'm going to try to get Captain Kirk out."

With these words Spock turned and moved silently into the cavern. The natives were looking the other way and he hoped he could get up to them unseen. The smoke aided his efforts; he managed to slip up behind the first man without being seen and immobilized him with the Vulcan neck pinch. The second guard soon followed his companion.

At last Spock could turn his attention to finding the Captain. As he got closer to the statue he could see the motionless figure lying, tied to the altar. He knew a momentary jolt of fear. From this distance Kirk looked dead.

As he drew nearer he could see the rise and fall of the Human's chest as he breathed.. Relief washed through him, startling him by its intensity. Kirk was tied in a position which must have been extremely uncomfortable, but at least he was alive.

Another careful survey verified that there were no more natives in the cavern. Spock moved quickly to Kirk, noting as he did so that the translator-transponder signal still did not register on the tricorder.

As he reached the Human's side Kirk opened his eyes. There was a momentary flash of disbelief in the Captain's eyes, then a blaze of joy and relief.

Kirk had been dozing, dreaming of the Enterprise, when something had wakened him. He had lain with his eyes closed as desolation swept over him again. Then, sensing a presence, he opened his eyes, at first hardly daring to believe that he really saw his First Officer. As the hours had passed he had found it harder and harder to cling to the small part of his mind and heart that had insisted the Vulcan was loyal. The realization that Spock had come back for him created an overwhelming sensation of joy and relief.

"Spock!"

The Vulcan was already working to free him.

"Captain." Spock freed Kirk's arms and was now working to free his ankles. "Can you walk? We must get out of the vicinity of this statue. It interferes with the sensors. We have to get to the surface before the natives arrive so we can beam up in groups rather than singly.

"I think so, Mr. Spock." Kirk rose unsteadily to his feet, moving stiffly as his numbed legs protested the sudden movement.

Spock steered him towards the tunnel, keeping a hand on Kirk's arm to steady him. The Captain plowed doggedly ahead despite the discomfort of returning circulation in his legs and arms. He most certainly didn't want to delay.

Before long they reached the rest of the search party and headed back for the surface. Spock pulled out his communicator.

"Spock to Enterprise."

"Scott here."

"Mr. Scott, we have found the Captain. Recall the other search party. Have a medical team standing by in the transporter room. The Captain has suffered a severe blow to the back of his head."

"Aye, Mr. Spock."

It took the party some time to get out of the tunnel. Kirk was unable to move very fast, due partly to stiffness and partly to the fact that fast movement made his head swim. Spock suspected the Captain might have a concussion. It would be logical with that heavy a blow on the head. At last they were on the surface, and Spock insisted that Kirk beam up in the first group.

"Very well, Mr. Spock, but only if you beam up at the same time. I rescued you once, I certainly don't want to have to do it again!" Kirk said teasingly.

"Captain, it is highly unlikely that this large a group would be attacked. There is no logical reason to worry about having to rescue anybody."

Kirk smiled at him again. Spock suddenly realized he was being teased. He was still unused to being teased by his formerly cold and correct Captain. The transporter effect saved him from having to make any further comments.

On materializing in the transporter room, Kirk was surprised to find McCoy therein a wheelchair, leading the medical team. Commander Scott was also there, handling the transporter. He was even more surprised by the look of relief and gladness that swept over the doctor's face as he and Spock stepped down from the platform.

"Captain, when you lost your signal we thought you were dead! Thank goodness you aren't." McCoy's relief expressed itself in this somewhat confusing statement. Then noticing Kirk's stiff movements, he turned professional.

"Sickbay, Captain! Now! I want to see how badly you're hurt." He moved closer, utilizing the scanner which he had with him, even if he was in a wheelchair. "It looks like you've got a concussion."

Kirk started to protest, then thought better of it as a wave of dizziness swept over him. Besides, the doctor's fussing was decidedly comforting, especially after his doubts and fears of the past hours.

An hour or so later Kirk found himself confined to a bed in Sickbay.

"Doctor, you're being unreasonable. I feel fine. Why can't I go rest in my own quarters?" he protested.

"Captain, you're definitely not 'Fine'. You have a concussion. I want you where I can keep my eye on you for at least 24 hours. We almost lost you once today. I want to be sure you stay safe." Ignoring Kirk's disgusted look he continued, "I'll be in my office if you need anything, sir."

"Oh no you won't," M'Benga interrupted. "You're staying right here, and getting back in bed. I don't know how you slipped out before, but that leg is in no shape for you to be trying to get around on it."

"Look, who's the doctor around here anyhow?" McCoy grumbled.

"As far as you're concerned, I am!" was the emphatic reply. "Now, get back in bed!"

"Better do as he says," Kirk advised. "Besides, turn about is fair play. It's about time somebody gave you a dose of your own medicine. You can keep me company."

McCoy looked first at M'Benga's determined face, then at Kirk's amused one, and decided to give in gracefully. He wasn't going to get out of it anyway.

"All right - I may be an old country sawbones, not a soldier, but I still know when I'm outnumbered."

In a few seconds he was occupying the bed next to Kirk. The two men chatted for a while, McCoy noticing the relaxed attitude of his Captain with pleasure.

Later Spock entered, carrying several reports. "Captain, I thought you'd like a report on mission status. The data collected by the first survey party along with my observations and samples of that green crystal should be adequate. All personnel are back on board, and the ship is ready to leave orbit on your command."

"What about the other casualties, Spock? How are they?" Kirk questioned.

"The two security guards who were with you will both recover completely. The other guard's injuries were minor. They have already been released from Sickbay."

"Good." Reaching for the intercom he called the Bridge. "Take us out of orbit, Mr. Sulu."



"Yes, sir."

"I had better get back to the Bridge, Captain," Spock said as he turned towards the door.

"I suppose so." Kirk hesitated as Spock headed for the door. he had something he wanted to say, but he wasn't sure how. If he didn't hurry it would be too late.

"Spock."

"Yes, Captain?" The Vulcan turned as he reached the door.

Kirk glanced briefly at McCoy, then looked back at Spock. "Spock, McCoy told me how you insisted on looking for me even when everyone thought I was dead. Well, Spock, I just wanted to say 'thank you'."

"There is no need to thank me, Captain. It was my... pleasure." There was only the faintest of hesitations as Spock substituted 'pleasure' for the almost automatic word 'duty'. It had suddenly occurred to him that duty had not been the prime reason - nor was it what Kirk needed to hear.

Kirk's eyes flicked away, then turned back to the Vulcan. The hardest part was yet to come. "I also... want to... apologise, Mr. Spock."

"For what, Captain?" Spock asked, puzzled.

"For not trusting you more. I'm afraid, down on the planet, I thought..."

"Sir, it was understandable," Spock interrupted.

"But I should have known a Vulcan wouldn't be disloyal to his superior."

"Captain, it wasn't just loyalty to a superior," McCoy broke in, recognizing from Kirk's attitude the reassurance the Captain was unconsciously reaching for. "You're our friend. We couldn't leave without doing everything possible to rescue you."

Kirk's gaze had shifted to the doctor as McCoy started talking. As he finished speaking, the last of the tension drained from the Captain's body. That was what he'd needed, assurance that his rescue had not been motivated solely by duty.

"Indeed, Captain. Dr. McCoy is quite correct," Spock agreed, realizing this was no time for Vulcan reticence.

Kirk grinned at his two new friends. He wanted to make some kind of acknowledgement.

"In that case, 'Captain' seems rather formal. Why not make it 'Jim'?"

"Agreed, Jim," McCoy responded enthusiastically. "First names are more friendly. I've never liked being formal."

"That may be, but 'Leonard' sounds a bit formal for an old country sawbones," Kirk continued, a gleam of mischief in his eyes. "I think 'Bones' sounds better - more informal, you know."

"Indeed, Jim, it does seem more appropriate," Spock solemnly agreed.

McCoy looked from one to the other. "What do I need a nickname for?" he complained, not very seriously.

"It's a lot quicker than 'Leonard', and it fits you better," Kirk explained, his tone bantering.

At that point Dr. M'Benga walked in, just in time to be startled by catching a glimpse of the broad grin on Kirk's face.

"All right, visiting hours are over, Mr. Spock. Captain Kirk and Dr. McCoy need their rest," he ordered.

"Certainly, Doctor. Captain... Jim... I'll go back to the Bridge."

"Right, Spock. Mind the store for me."

Kirk smiled to himself at the Vulcan's puzzled look as M'Benga hustled Spock out the door. M'Benga turned for a parting admonition.

"Leonard, get some sleep. You too, sir."

Kirk sank down gratefully into the bed, aware of a warmth and contentment he had not known for years. He glanced once at McCoy, who was already almost asleep, then closed his eyes.

//It's good to have friends again,// he thought as he drifted off to sleep.

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#### NO BEACH TO WALK

Not for me the love of woman  
Longer than a passing moment.  
Nor the feel of childrens' arms  
To hold me safe in their embrace.  
Not for me a place that's mine alone,  
Where no-one can supplant me.  
You, my ship, are bride and mistress,  
And our only home is Space.

You take everything, possessing me  
Until I am your extension.  
I am your eyes, your arms,  
Your very guide unto the stars.  
And yet I am your child also,  
Held safe in womb-like shielding.  
But you will never let me go.  
I wear your chains in golden bars.

Four hundred faces look to me  
For strength and comfort always;  
But I can never look to you  
The times I am afraid.  
Only Spock - like some High Priest -  
Is privy to my doubts and feelings,  
While your secrets come alive  
Under his dark, all-seeing gaze.

Enterprise - you witch, you siren,  
Goddess with a Human consort,  
Let me walk along a beach -  
For just one day, let me be free!  
But no. No beach to walk,  
No life to live as others know it.  
Your engines mesh with my heart...  
With you and Spock I e'er must be.

\*\*\*\*\* Sheryl Peterson \*\*\*\*\*

#### CONFESSION

Just as time speeds by... is gone,  
So the beating heart.  
Illogical to dream...  
(What use are tears in an arid land?)  
To speak the words and understand,  
Love...  
Illogical emotion... step aside.  
Whilst seeing clearly...  
I confess...

I still feel.

Ann Smith

HERC by Meg Wright

Kirk stared at the closing door, savagely controlling his gut reaction; losing his temper would profit no-one but the Orions. His eyes fell to his clenched, white-knuckled fists, a paler shade of the desk-top's mock-mahogany surface. The tension in them angered him still further, and he opened them, palms down, pushing himself abruptly up and out of his chair, setting it swinging steadily.

Ignoring its muffled thumping he strode to the window and stood looking out, gazing down over the city, finding cold comfort in its clean lines, its famous bridge a midget meccano construction from this height.

Damn the Orions! And damn all planetside politicians who worked themselves into a frenzy of righteous anger instead of quietly sitting down and trying to see someone else's point of view for a change. Was it really so different out there? Had he learned so much out in the chill infinity of space? He spread his hands on the wide window-sill, leaning his head against the unbreakable inner window, his eyes unfocussed.

Back on Janus IV they'd come to terms with the Horta, adjusted to the idea there could be more than one way to see things. They hadn't lashed out indiscriminately, senselessly killing without trying to understand.

A memory swam back, of himself saying sharply, "Your orders are, shoot to kill."; of Spock's impassive face as he accepted the subsequent reprimand; of the deep voice, its resonance subtly altered by the communicator, saying urgently, "Kill it, Captain. Quickly!"

He let out the breath he had been holding. No, it wasn't in the chill of space he'd learned so much, it was in the warmth of a cold, black gaze...

How often had he said that every Human Captain should have a Vulcan to temper his impulsiveness and teach him the value of looking at things from every angle, of not judging prematurely?

But his own tutor had gone, slipping back to the harsh deserts of his own world without an explanation, without a word, and now he no longer had Lori's understanding presence to go home to, to seek refuge with, doubts and uncertainties were finally swamping him, shortening his temper, catching on his ragged nerve-endings.

This afternoon he'd barely kept his temper, courted disaster with a reckless freedom that had shocked him even while it fed his need.

"Damn you, Spock," he whispered. "Why did you go?"

He turned fiercely away from the window, holding himself in check, ignoring the hollowness within, the aching sense of loss, of misdirection, a bitter smile just touching his lips. McCoy had been right after all, his own certainty just a blanking out, the subsequent euphoria with Lori a self-deceiving extra layer of false content. He'd got it wrong, lost the famous Kirk nerve, fled from problems that had suddenly seemed too great to solve. Out there, out in the clean, cold honesty of space he'd been alive, part of his ship, his silver lady...

He shook his head wearily, stacked the piles of documents and tapes in order, committed them to his safe, and left without looking back.

Riding down in the lift he avoided the eye of a hopeful stenographer; the girl wasn't much older than Peter, for Heaven's sake! Being the youngest Admiral around brings more problems in its wake than even McCoy envisaged, he thought sourly as he left the building, acknowledging salutes and farewells with an illusive serenity, and allowed his driver to take him home in a taciturn silence, slumped against the cushioning force-web in a pose of uncharacteristic defeat.

Keying his lock, he let himself in to his empty apartment and went straight to his bedroom, wrenching his uniform off carelessly, angrily; and sloppily letting it lie where it fell he marched into the fresher, closing the door with

a snap.

The cloud of warm, pine-scented water enveloped him in its humid embrace. Suddenly its luxury disgusted him, and he found himself irrationally longing to bathe in the cold, muddy water of the creek close by his childhood home, wanting to run back damp and shivering to the warmth of the family kitchen, to Sam's teasing and his mother's unspoken, gentle support. He thrust the door open again, reaching for a towel, nauseated by its soft folds. Everything in his life was perfect, too goddammed perfect and out of his control.

Yes, that was what frightened him; he was no longer master of his own destiny, had no more command over even trivial things.

"You've finally done it, Kirk," he whispered aloud. "You've finally lost command... and you stood still and let it happen to you, let them take it away. You fool! You blind, stupid fool!"

Still damp, he threw the towel down and went back into his bedroom. Ignoring the littered clothes he went to the press set in its deep recess, dragging out fresh clothes without conscious thought... anonymous dark-green jumpsuit, sneakers, fashionably huge dark glasses. He surveyed himself in the full-length mirror, cynically amused at his youthful appearance. It was bad enough always to be the youngest achiever, it compounded the problems to look it as well.

Turning away he bent to retrieve his credit card from his pants pocket, transferring it to the tabbed, inner pocket of his jumpsuit, defiantly left the top ten inches unzipped, and went out of his apartment.

He walked for a long time, aimlessly, not even thinking properly, letting the twilight grey of evening soak into him, welcoming the warm blackness of night for its comforting camouflage. Tired at last, he came to the warm orange glow of a bar, spilling its conviviality across the sidewalk in a welter of confused sounds and scents. He plunged inside.

With Saurian brandy spreading its familiar heat through his misery he began to relax, able to look at memories he usually shied away from. He caught at the fatuous smile crossing his face, willing it back. He ordered a second glass and sipped it. Oh, those memories. The smile began to grow again. Anyone would think he'd been an habitual lush in those days to recall the scenes so vividly, but in reality those quiet, shared moments had been all too rare. The quietness of his quarters in the early hours of night, all three of them with tasks completed, no pressures or worries, the brandy and the Vulcan hilva on the table between them, relaxed and at home with each other. God, it had been good to be alive in those days!

Another sip of brandy, the glow flushing through him, releasing the months of rejection, admitting self-knowledge.

He should never have accepted promotion, should have listened to McCoy and stayed in space. It was where he belonged, where he was alive and alert, his mind incisive. Decisions had never been so hard out there, even the life-and-death ones he had loathed so deeply. They had never been easy - never that - but they had had to be made, the guilt lived with afterwards. And they had mattered, really mattered; were not made after weighing the balance of aggression or offence, but out of the real stuff of life, out of a need for contact, for understanding, for freedom and the right to maturity.

And he'd survived, against all the odds, all the hardships; survived to bring his ship back home. He paused a moment, quietly honouring the deaths among his crew, the sometimes avoidable deaths his conscience would never let him forget but that he had learned to accept for his own survival.

And then he'd let it go, succumbing to the perfectly-timed, impeccably executed sales talk of Heihachiro Nogura; a cunning, devious mind as incisive as his own, picking at his vulnerability, exposing his doubts, offering a haven - a perfect, face-saving, important-seeming haven.

God, he was a fool!

Impatiently he dialled for yet another brandy, gazing into its swirling brown depths with fierce concentration.

It was time he faced up to it. He did not belong here.

Extraordinary how the acceptance calmed him, tension flowing from him like the gentle ebbing of the sea. He straightened, no longer intent upon the world within himself and in his glass.

Tomorrow he would go to Nogura, talk to him openly. He couldn't take this life another month, smothering himself in comfortable living, unearned ease. He needed... black space, a challenge, the jolt of adrenalin through his system... he wanted to live again.

He lifted his gaze from the no-longer-needed alcoholic crutch and met a pair of blue eyes fixed on his, a face smiling hopefully.

Content in his new-found peace he smiled back, unaware that the forceful charm he had once used to blatantly was still a most potent weapon.

The young face flushed and the boy rose and came closer.

"It... it is Admiral Kirk, isn't it?"

Kirk flicked a rueful glance at the disguising glasses, now lying useless beside his drink. "Yes, I'm Kirk - but I don't know you, do I?"

"Oh, no sir, but I wanted to say thank you."

"Explain."

"For... for that marvellous speech you made at the Congress the other day." The boy flushed a deeper pink and added disarmingly, "There's been a lot of dissension recently about Starfleet, you know. What you had to say explained it all so clearly. Tom and I... uh, Tom's my friend from school... we've wanted to go to the Academy since... oh, 'way-back when we were just kids... and yesterday they said yes... my Dad and Tom's. We'll be going next month."

Kirk was pleased for him. "It's a great life," he said softly, his eyes shadowing reminiscently.

The boy nodded. "I know several others too, who are going to apply... even my sister Nancy!"

Kirk's eyes crinkled in amusement. "I can remember what it was to be star-crazy," he agreed.

"Yes." The boy's face was alight. "You do understand, and you're making other people see it, you're making it real and important, immediate." He paused, seeing unmistakable withdrawal on the older face. "I... I'm sorry..."

Kirk's head moved in a slow negative. "You haven't done anything."

A sour, trapped feeling was rising in him, smothering his elation, strangling the impotent, new-born self-awareness even as it drew its first, struggling breaths. He picked up the dark-lensed glasses and slipped them on, hiding the hurt he knew his eyes would betray.

"I'm pleased for you. Very pleased. What's your name so I can watch the class lists?"

"Donovan. Joe Donovan, sir."

"I won't forget," Kirk promised. He held out his hand. "All the best, Joe. Do well."

"Thank you." The smooth, young face was practically purple, bursting with pride. "I'll do my very best."

Kirk watched him go, slowly bleeding inside, feeling reality draining from him, leaving him dead.

He picked up the abandoned brandy, drank it in one savage gulp, and walked steadily out into the darkness.

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NAKED TIME by Valerie Piacentini

## (An Imaginary Interlude)

"Spock! Where the hell have you been?"

Kirk burst into the briefing room like a whirlwind, relief and anger flooding through his mind. Relief, because Spock was here, and unharmed; anger, at the Vulcan's failure to respond to his call.

"What are you doing in here? You're needed on the Bridge - we've got Riley out of Engineering at last, but he's ~~shit~~ down the engines. Scotty says it'll take... **Spock**, are you listening to me?"

No answer. The Vulcan was sitting half turned away, his face in shadow. Kirk reached out, spun the chair round, caught his breath in surprise. There were tears on the Vulcan's cheeks, his whole body was trembling with the effort to control the emotions that tore at him.

"What's wrong, Spock?" But he knew already - the strange contamination had affected Spock at last.

With desperate intensity Spock fought for control... and lost. Burying his face in his hands he wept in an agony of desolation Kirk could only vaguely comprehend. Gradually he was able to distinguish words, somehow choked out through the tears.

"My mother... a Human woman... on Vulcan, where love is in bad taste. She loved me... but I could never tell her... how much I loved..."

Gently, Kirk laid a hand on the Vulcan's shoulder. "spock, she would know. Humans don't always need to be told. She understood the Vulcan way, accepted it. Don't blame yourself."

Spock only shook his head despairingly.

Kirk hesitated. From the intercom came Sulu's voice, steadily counting off the minutes to destruction. So little time... He must recall Spock to awareness - only he could save the Enterprise now. Pulling Spock's hands from his face, Kirk slapped him hard.

"Snap out of it, Mister! My ship's in danger - I need you on the Bridge!" He struck Spock again, fighting down the eave of pity that swept through him as he felt Spock's tears on his hand.

"Try to act like a First Officer! You're so proud of being Vulcan - behave like one! There are over four hundred people on this ship - we're not giving in without a fight. There must be a way to save my ship... My ship..."

His voice tailed off uncertainly. His ship... the Enterprise... his all-demanding, all consuming love. She took so much, and gave so little - only a crushing load of responsibility and loneliness. Loneliness... yes, that was it. Spock knew how it was...

He continued, unaware that he was speaking aloud. "Captain James Kirk of the Enterprise - what's it worth, after all? Friends... home... love... all gone, back there somewhere. I was the youngest Captain ever appointed to a Starship, so proud of myself, so confident, until I actually saw her, took command. I hadn't realised, not fully, what it would mean. Seeing men die at my orders... No-one, ever, to share the responsibility... always pretending, hiding the doubt, the uncertainty... the loneliness."

A hand touched his, shyly, hesitantly. "I understand, Jim."

He looked up, saw the dark, usually expressionless eyes filled now with compassion and gentleness.

"Yes... you do understand," he said thankfully.

"Of course, Jim. I have always been alone. Vulcans consider me Human

Humans see only the Vulcan. Only here, on this ship, have I found a home... happiness. You... reached out to me, offered me friendship, sought mine in return. Only you, Jim, have ever considered what I am, not what I seem."

Kirk sighed, feeling the tension within him drain away. "I remember," he said slowly, "the day I took command of the Enterprise. I was so nervous, trying to hide it - and you looked so... so forbidding as you greeted me with that chilling Vulcan courtesy. I could feel the crew watching me, weighing me up, comparing me with Captain Pike - and I just knew I wasn't going to measure up to the standard he set.

"You showed me over the ship, and I couldn't take it all in... then you escorted me to my quarters. As you turned to leave you gave that Vulcan salute - I practised it for hours when I knew you were going to be my First Officer - and you said, 'I wish you well, Captain Kirk.' Then you offered me your hand.

"You'll never know how much confidence that gave me. I knew how much Vulcans loathe physical contact, and I'd remembered not to try to shake hands; I felt that your gesture meant that you'd tested me in some way, and found that you could accept me."

"Yes, I remember. I could sense your nervousness that day, but also so much more. There was something in you that intrigued me from the first moment. I learned enough in those first hours to know that you would command my loyalty. Even then, I hoped for... your friendship... but I did not know... how to win it."

Kirk leaned forward. "You won my friendship by offering yours. Not as a Human would have done - not in words - but... I knew. You eased the loneliness, Spock, just by being there."

They sat quietly then, each content to smile into the other's eyes with open affection; but soon in Spock's mind a scarcely-formed thought struggled for recognition. Slowly he released Kirk's hand, a frown of concentration crossing his face.

"You said something about the engines, Jim?"

"Yes - Riley shut them down. Scotty says it'll take too long to bring them to full power. We're being drawn into the planet."

Kirk spoke lazily, almost casually, and Spock realised with a stab of fear that the virus was affecting him too, now. Perhaps his Vulcan constitution threw off the effects of its own accord, but he found that he could think clearly again. The strangely open concern for Kirk and the others was still strong in him, and coupled with it was the determination to save them. They had given him so much, these Humans, especially Kirk; now he could repay them - there must be a way.

He stood and paced the briefing room for a moment, thinking rapidly. The intermix formula... only a theory... but it should work....and it was their best chance. He turned to bend over Kirk, touching his shoulder lightly.

"I think I know what to do, Jim. Remain here - I will call Mr. Scott from the Bridge."

Kirk watched him as he left, then sat back thankfully. For once the heavy weight of responsibility had been lifted from his shoulders. Spock knew what to do, and would do it - there was no need to worry.

Part of his mind considered what had just happened; the infection, releasing all their deepest, most carefully-hidden emotions, had compelled them to speak openly of their friendship at last. He supposed sadly that when the effects wore off, their relationship would once more be as it had been...

But no, he realised with sudden contentment, that would not be possible. Truth, once spoken, could never be completely hidden again.

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A PRIVATE LITTLE WORRY by Vicki Richards

Christine Chapel went through her daily work in Sickbay like an automaton, trying desperately not to think of how much of a fool she had made of herself. But no matter how diligently she applied herself to the task before her, she just could not stop herself thinking about it.

How could she have been such an idiot? But she had been so worried that he would die, that this would be the time when his will and the skills of Leonard McCoy and M'Benga combined would not be enough to save him. So she had sat there, watching him unnecessarily, knowing full well that the vital signs monitors would keep her informed of his condition, that there was no need for her to be sitting there by his side. But she had sat there, watching, in the place where James Kirk would have been had he not been down on that planet trying to sort out yet another Klingon-caused mess.

If only she hadn't held his hand!

She had never witnessed first-hand the Vulcan healing trance before. How could she know that he would be aware of everything that went on around him? For all purposes it looked as though he was deeply unconscious - the diagnostic panel said so too - but then M'Benga had come and told her that he would know what she was doing.

She didn't even know M'Benga had seen. How could she have been so stupid as to hold his hand?

And now he was recovered, how could she ever face him again? Surely what little respect Spock had for her would have vanished completely in the face of such ridiculous Human behaviour.

Once out of the healing trance, and past the dreadful moment when he had woken and told her to strike him, he had recovered quickly, as he always did. Now he was back on the Bridge, back to his normal duties at the Captain's side, and for the last few days she had managed - thankfully - to avoid him. The Enterprise was a big ship. But she knew that sooner or later she would see him again, that their duties would bring them into contact. How could she face him? She just didn't know.

The moment she was dreading was not too far away, had she but known it. But had she known it she would have found some way to excuse herself from Sickbay when he came for the check-up McCoy had insisted on. And McCoy, as usual seeing far more than some people gave him credit for, had realised that she would; and that was why he hadn't mentioned it to her.

He didn't know exactly why Christine was so embarrassed, but from something M'Benga had told him, he had a good idea. And he knew, if Christine didn't, that Spock wouldn't make a big thing out of her holding his hand. After all, doctors and nurses had been doing that to their patients ever since medicine began. And Spock would certainly want to avoid embarrassing her.

McCoy had wanted to have a few words with her, to put her mind at rest, but had decided that as she seemed to be so touchy about the matter the only person who would be able to ease her worries would be the Vulcan himself. Not that he had told Spock about it; he was just relying on Spock to act his normal self.

He supposed there was a slight risk that Christine might react the wrong way, and then they would all be embarrassed - she seemed to be so convinced that she had somehow made a fool of herself. But McCoy had decided that the very small risk involved was worth it if it would get his Head Nurse out from under the black cloud of depression that had settled on her during the past few days.

Spock appeared through the Sickbay doors unannounced, causing Christine almost to drop the tray of test tubes she was carrying. She didn't, though. Not Christine Chapel. She shot McCoy an accusing look. She didn't know he had



arranged this on purpose, but she most definitely thought he might have done.

"Oh Spock - there you are," said McCoy hurriedly, before anyone else could say anything. "I've just had a call from Engineering - one of Scotty's men isn't feeling too well. I've told him I'll be there right away. Christine will have to give you your check-up. I'll see you later."

With that McCoy was gone, leaving Christine glaring after him. Now she knew he had planned it. Just wait till she got hold of him!

But that would be later; for the moment she was faced with the problem of giving Spock a check-up without doing or saying anything too stupid. She noticed that he was staring at her with a **rather** puzzled expression. Then she realised, to her discomfort, that she had been shaking a little. Quickly she pulled herself together and went to set up the equipment without a word, because she simply couldn't think of anything to say to him.

"The equipment is ready, Mr. Spock," she managed to get out finally, avoiding looking at him.

"I have already informed Dr. McCoy that this check-up is unnecessary," said Spock in his usual manner. "I am quite recovered from my injury."

"Nevertheless, I've got my orders," she replied as evenly as she could, all the time wondering what he must be thinking about her. Then she turned round, and couldn't avoid looking directly into his face. Unaccountably, she dropped the scanner she was holding.

"Nurse Chapel," said Spock gently, "is anything wrong?"

"Er... no, Mr. Spock. I'm just a bit clumsy today."

"That is not like you."

Oh no! thought Christine. If he's going to be nice to me, that's going to be the last straw. I'm going to break down, and then he'll think I'm a complete idiot - if he doesn't already!

"While I am here, Nurse Chapel," Spock continued quietly, carefully avoiding looking at her, as it seemed to upset her, "I should like to thank you for your excellent nursing while I was ill."

"Oh, that's all right," said Christine in a strangled voice. "Only doing my job."

Then he didn't think she was an idiot! He had actually thanked her.

How she got through the rest of the check-up she didn't know. But she did, and Spock left Sickbay thankful that he seemed to have managed to 'cheer her up' a little, as Jim would have put it, though he really had no idea what he had done to effect it.

Christine, for her part, was so relieved and grateful that she forgot to shout at McCoy when he returned from his fictional emergency in Engineering. But she was puzzled when McCoy grabbed her by the shoulders, grinned, and muttered something that sounded like, "Thank goodness for Vulcans" before walking off into his office.

Although she felt more like her old self than she had done in days, Christine began to wonder if maybe there was something a little wrong with Leonard McCoy.

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Starship, Starship, have you any crew?  
Kirk and Spock and Chekov too.  
Some for the Sickbay, some for the Brig,  
But none to do the cleaning - they think it's infra-dig.

The Wright Family

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